Domestic politics in Israeli peace-making, 1988-1994.

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DOMESTIC POLITICS IN ISRAELI PEACE-MAKING, 1988-1994

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A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS

2001

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an explanation of why Israel in the years between 1988 and 1994 decided on what might be termed a path to peace with both the Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It argues that, in Israel, peacemaking that entails any form of territorial concession is largely an issue that can be best understood in terms of domestic politics. Accordingly, at the heart of this thesis lies the assumption that the key to explaining Israel's road to peace lies in an appreciation of the dynamics of Israel's domestic politics.

Part at least of this story is an understanding of certain key moments in the formation of Israeli thinking about movement towards a peace with the Palestinians. The thesis therefore examines the impact of the Intifada on Israeli thinking as well as detailing crucial turning points in domestic politics, not least Labour's electoral victory in 1992 and the subsequent formation of the most dovish government in Israel's history. The thesis also pays attention to the politics of personality and the role of key figures, such as Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, in the politics that permitted Israel's move to peace. To facilitate such an understanding, the study employs some analytical concepts from what might be described as the 'middle-range' theories, for example the so-called Bureaucratic Politics Model but its judgements are also fundamentally informed by both interview and primary source material.

Hence, overall the thesis looks at the internal dynamics of Israeli peacemaking and demonstrates that, although external factors are certainly, as the last chapter argues an important part of the story, the decision to make peace was also rooted in the dynamic complex domestic politics of Israel.

DECLARATION

I, Hassan Barari, the author of this research declare that the content of this thesis is my original work. None of the material contained in this study has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other university. All the material, in this thesis, which is not my own work, has been appropriately cited

Hassan A. Barari

2001

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend my gratitude to a number of people and institutions without whom this thesis would have never been possible. My supervisor, Professor Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, has been of great help during the period I spent preparing and writing this thesis. Her support, constant encouragement, and above all her supervision style have made things much easier. Her thorough assessment and critique of the thesis are greatly appreciated.

I am equally grateful to Professor Mustafa Hamarneh, Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan. His support, friendship, and faith in me as well as his intellectual guidance have played a crucial role throughout my academic journey. I am also indebted to the staff of the Centre for Strategic Studies in Amman.

I am also grateful to the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, to its former director Professor Moshe Maoz, Professor Shimon Shamir, Professor Avraham Sela, and Dr. Yitzhak Reiter for their assistance during my three-year stay in Israel. Special thanks must go to those who agreed to be interviewed and share their ideas with me.

I was very fortunate to receive financial help from the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan and the Chevening scholarship offered at the British Council in Amman. Without their financial support, this study would not have been possible.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Department of Politics at University of Durham. Professor Anoushiravan Ehteshami, director of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (CMEIS), deserves special thanks for his constant support and encouragement and for allowing me to use the excellent facilities of the centre. I am also grateful to all the staff of CMEIS.

During my study, I enjoyed support of my friends Lesley-Ann Robson, Sally Leatherland, Radwan al-Ammar, Nadine Wilstead, Mohammad al-Masri, Narmeen Murad, Firas Azzam, Tarik Naja, Ibrahim Serafi, Mayyada Abdu, and Jennifer Ward. Over the last year, the help, friendship and sense of humour of Warwick Knowles proved invaluable. I am also so lucky to have the friendship of Professor Susan Lourenco and Louis Williams who were there whenever I needed them. Above all I am grateful to my daughters Lana, Luma, Lina, and my wife, Madiha for being patient, for standing by me and for their love.

INTRODUCTION

On October 26, 1994, Israel and Jordan signed a full-fledged peace treaty thus ending 46-years of formal enmity. The treaty came almost a year after the celebrated and highly symbolic handshake between then Israeli Prime Minster, Yitzhak Rabin, and the chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat at the White House. Thanks to this event there was a widespread belief throughout the Middle East that Israel and its neighbours had at long last started a process of what might be termed historic reconciliation. The Israeli decision, however, to take steps towards peace had not come overnight, but had evolved gradually and had come after decades of war with the Arabs. Therefore, the natural question arises is the following: what made Israel finally pursue this path? The answer to this interesting question is the focus of this thesis.

Of course there are many analysts who have looked at Israel and the peace process. Efraim Inbar's *War and peace in Israeli Politics: Labor Party Positions on National Security*, David Makovsky's *Making Peace with the PLO*, Yossi Beilin's *Touching Peace*, Avi Shlaim's *The Iron Wall*, Yehuda Lukacs' *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process*, and Moshe *Zak's Hussein Makes Peace* (in Hebrew) are just examples.

However, there are few, if any, academic studies which seek to utilise internal explanations to explore the shift within Israel from war to peace. Herein lies at least part of the contribution of this research. The uniqueness of this study lies in the fact that it is a new interpretation of Israel's foreign policy that regards domestic politics, personality, and the dynamics of intra-party politics as the key to understanding Israel's peace

strategies between the 1988-94 period. In doing so it utilises concepts from different approaches of foreign policy analysis, using middle range theories in particular.

Themes and Ideas

In explaining Israel's decision to make peace with Jordan and the Palestinians, this thesis will explore, analyse, and examine several themes. First, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate, foreign policy in Israel is highly influenced by inputs from domestic politics. The absence of domestic national consensus over the issue of peace is a major theme in this study. This enduring problem, which was caused by the territorial conquest of the Six-Day War and has since dominated Israeli politics, became increasingly acute due to fundamental differences among the main parties over the political future of the Occupied Territories and the peace process.

Therefore, the second theme examines the origins and evolution of the differences among Israeli parties and how they indeed hindered the peace process. However, Israeli leaders tried to pass the buck for the lack of peace to the Arab side. The traditional and official explanation provided by Israel for the absence of peace was that there was no Arab partner to talk to. Behind this excuse or justification however, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, a rather different story can be discerned. This is another theme to be examined in this research.

The unexpected outbreak of the Palestinian popular uprising (1987-93), widely known by its Arabic name as Intifada, is an extremely important topic that indeed crystallised the differences between the two leading Israeli political parties: Labour and Likud. The importance of the Intifada stems from the fact that it had accelerated the evolution of a

Palestinian orientation in Labour's foreign policy. This shift, as this thesis demonstrates, was an extremely important prerequisite for the signing of both the Oslo accord and the peace treaty with Jordan.

The lack of national consensus was exacerbated by another factor, the intra-party differences. This was no more visible than within the Labour Party, and in fact had great bearings on the party's positions on peace. The reasons for these differences, such as clashes of personalities, differences of perceptions, and severe competition among top leaders, constitute an important theme of this research. The role of personality also became increasingly important in Israeli politics. The emphasis, however, is on Yitzhak Rabin who, after wining the 1992 general election, seemed to be the only one who was able to sell the Oslo Accord to the Israeli public.

Rabin's ascendance could only be understood as a result of internal democratic reforms within the Labour Party. Without those reforms it was highly unlikely that Rabin could have been able to wrest the party leadership from Shimon Peres. As a result, this was a development of great consequence for the prospect of Labour's electoral victory in the 1992 general election.

While the thesis mainly focuses on the internal dynamics of Israeli politics as the key to account for the shift in Israel's foreign policy, one cannot simply account for the breakthrough in the peace process without taking into considerations the bearings of what might be termed external factors—the United States and Jordan, in particular. Israeli peace strategies have viewed both the United States and Jordan as important players and hence, their polices had influenced the positions of certain key players. But

on the whole, one cannot escape from the fact that the roles assigned to these two players with regard to Israeli peace strategies were profoundly affected by domestic politics. Therefore another theme of this study is the different approaches in Israeli foreign policy towards those two important players. In addition, the end of bipolarity in the international system and other regional changes positively transformed the Israeli strategic environment. These factors are deemed to be so significant that they form the subject of their own chapter as well as impact upon the discussion of domestic variables.

Methodology

The methodology adopted to conduct this research uses theories of foreign policy, and is then fundamentally informed by interviews and other primary sources.

THEORY

Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) emerged as a sub-field within International Relations (IR). The Traditional Rational Actor approach for studying foreign policy is based on concepts derived from the Realist school of IR. This state-centric paradigm assumes that the state is a unitary and rational actor. Moreover, it underestimates the importance of non-state actors in the realm of international relations. The international system, according to this approach is one characterised by anarchy. In this anarchic environment, the state's actions are designed to achieve security and survival and thus it acts rationally. Here the concept of rationality is a key one in the realist world. That is why this approach is so popular. By assuming that the state is a rational actor, the task for understanding why a state behaves as it does becomes easier.

Explaining or understanding foreign policy by relying on the Rational Actor Model came under intense criticism especially from the Bureaucratic Politics Model. This approach challenges the idea that the state is a unitary actor. It assumes that decisions are the result of pulling and hauling between key decision-makers. Therefore, according to this approach, foreign policy can be better explained as the result of bargaining among individuals rather than as a conscious choice. As a result, rationality is not guaranteed as the Rational Actor Model assumes.

The aphorism 'where you stand depends on where you sit' is a key concept of this model. This means that a player's stand on certain issues is determined by his or her bureaucratic position. While this may be true in the United States, governmental position in Israel is but one factors among many other variables that affects a player's stand on certain issues such as peace. Therefore, in order to get a more effective tool for analysing Israel's foreign policy, it is suggested that factors rooted in domestic politics, determine, to a large extent, a player's policy preference.

Moulded as a national security matter, Israeli foreign policy is an interesting case. Before 1967, there had been a national consensus over national security. The image propagated by Israeli leaders, that society should be united behind its leadership in the face of the imminent existential threat posed by the Arabs helped keep at bay the inherent debate within Zionism over the exact physical borders of the state. The stunning victory of 1967 removed that existential threat and indeed led to the breakdown of the national consensus. This became more acute as a result of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the eruption of the Palestinian Intifada. As a consequence, though Israel's foreign policy is still shaped in the language of national security, it is about defining

both the political boundaries of Zionism and the borders of the state.[1] One should look within the internal scene in Israel to account for big decisions like making peace.

INTERVIEWS

In order to gather the primary material, I conducted a total of 19 interviews with senior Israeli politicians and prominent academics during a field trip to Israel from January to March 2000. One interview was conducted with a Palestinian during my participation in a workshop on *Progress or Breakdown of the Peace Process* which was organised by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan and held in Geneva in May 2000. Another interview, with an Israeli professor, was held during my three-year stay in Israel (1996-1999) during which I learnt Hebrew, studied Israeli politics closely, and undertook some courses at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In addition, during my field trip, I had the opportunity to examine the minutes of the Knesset (Divrei ha-Knesset) as well as Israeli daily newspapers in both languages Hebrew and English.

I conducted all of my interviews in a systematic way. By this I mean that I had a set of main questions that I asked all of my interviewees to answer. But in every answer there were interesting discussions that enriched my understanding and enhanced my ability to acquire sharp analysis of the situation. I was allowed to tape most of the interviews. I was aware that some of my interviewees, for different reasons, might not answer all of my questions frankly. This was a problem that I tried to overcome by checking their answers against published interviews and against those of other interviewees. I also checked their answers against their actual actions and behaviours while in office.

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[1] Clive Jones, 'Israeli Foreign Policy: The Past as Present?', unpublished paper, p.2

The limitations of my research are obvious in that the substance of this thesis is such that it inevitably deals with current affairs. In addition, this subject remains deeply controversial and emotional and there were naturally several questions which my interviewees either refused to answer or offered answers that I could not verify. Therefore, these were omitted from my analysis.

The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is made up of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter one provides a conceptual framework for understanding and explaining Israel's foreign policy decision-making. In this chapter an overview of different approaches to foreign policy analysis is made. The approach used to conduct the study draws on analytical concepts derived from middle-range theories and the Bureaucratic Politics approach in particular. These concepts provide an excellent starting point for analysing Israel's move to peace. The chapter also defines both the independent and dependent variables of the study.

Chapter two presents an analytical historical background to the study. In many respects it sets the scene for the focus of the study. The formulation of Israel's foreign policy towards both Jordan and the Occupied Territories was, to a large extent, the function of domestic politics. It commences by presenting an overview of the origin of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It argues that the interaction of several bureaucratic positions within successive Israeli governments, following the Six-Day War, were responsible for the status quo. Throughout this period, the Labour-led governments sought to avoid taking clear decisions by advocating the Jordanian option. This option, according to Labour, would solve the Palestinian problem by partitioning the West Bank between Jordan and

Israel in a way that would allow Israel to annex the strategic chunks of the West Bank but simultaneously allow Jordan to control the densely populated areas. Jordan, in Israeli strategic thinking, was a means to avoid or get rid of the Palestinians. The different interpretations of the Jordanian option coupled with the great domestic input in Israel's foreign policy led to the lack of peace between Jordan and Israel during this period.

Chapter three examines the impact of the Intifada on Israeli decision-makers. This factor was of great significant that led indeed to changes in the minds of some Israeli leaders. Yitzhak Rabin was, as the chapter will show, the most profoundly affected by this. He was the Defence Minister when the Intifada broke out, and therefore was in charge of finding a solution. The failure of the military to subdue the Intifada led Rabin to understand that a political solution was the only possibility. The persistence of the Intifada forced Rabin to cultivate some contacts with local Palestinians in order to negotiate an interim agreement. Labour's peace strategy was dealt a death blow when King Hussein, for his own reasons, announced the administrative and legal disengagement from the West Bank. Labour lost its preferred Jordanian option and Rabin started to view seriously a Palestinian option (according to this option, the Palestinians rather than the Jordanians were the main partner for negotiations).

Chapter four focuses on internal reforms within the Labour Party. It was believed that Labour, with its motto 'territorial compromise', could advance the peace process. But Labour lost its dominance and the political centre to Likud. Reasons for Labour's electoral decline are presented and examined. Labour's image among the Israeli public as a closed, hierarchic, centralised and Ashkenazi body contributed to its decline. As a

result, Labour was unable to portray itself as being representative and responsive to the changing constituencies. Internal democratic reforms were of great significance for the party to be viewed as representative and responsive. The outcome of these reforms was the advancement of young politicians who advocated ideological changes (i.e. the Palestinian national right). The result was that Labour was increasingly leaning towards a dovish position. However, it was widely believed by Labour's members that should Labour want to win election, Rabin should be placed as a candidate for the premiership. The final outcomes of these reforms were impressive; Rabin as the head of the most representative and responsive list won the 1992 general election.

The so-called politics of personality is the topic of chapter five. The importance of personal traits on leaders' foreign policy behaviours is well documented in literature. The focus of this chapter is primarily centred on the personality of Rabin. His belief system, ideology, perception of the Middle East, and his personality are evaluated. Also, his perennial rivalry with Shimon Peres is considered to have left a negative impact on the peace process. Finally, this chapter makes a connection between the changes that Rabin had been through and the progress in the peace process.

In the final chapter, the bearings of external factors on Israel's peace strategies are examined. It is argued that these factors played a part in Israel's foreign policy. Nevertheless, they could not on their own account for Israel's decision to make peace. The impact of systemic factors (the demise of the Cold War and transformation of the international system to a unipolar one) and regional factors (the second Gulf War and its impact on regional balance of power) are assessed. The role of two countries, the United States and Jordan, are believed to be of some bearing on Israel's peace strategies.

Therefore they are examined. Finally, in the conclusion, a summary of the findings is presented.

CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: HOW TO THINK ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

This chapter provides an explanation of the conceptual approach adopted throughout this study. The approach is grounded in both theories of International Relations and those associated with the sub area known as Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). The theoretical framework adopted is designed to facilitate a study of peacemaking in Israeli foreign policy in the period between 1988 and1994.

The primary assertion made by this study is that Israeli foreign policy is determined *primarily* by domestic political factors. Therefore, the decision to make peace in 1993 was the result of an evolution of the domestic political environment. Specifically the nature of intra-party factional politics, the inter-parties politics, the politics of personality, and ideology are the keys to understanding Israeli behaviour regarding the peace process. Therefore, variables derived from domestic politics must be studied for a full appreciation of what and why peace eventually occurred.

The domestic context, i.e. the system of proportional representation which led to the fragmentation of Israeli politics and coalition government, operates within the international political environment, which in turn is informed by the end of the Cold War, the Second Gulf War, and the impact of external players engaged in the conflict, specifically the United States and Jordan.

The author makes a distinction between what is necessary and what is sufficient for peacemaking. The necessary conditions established the pre-conditions needed to provide the right international environment to which domestic politics could respond positively. The sufficient conditions entails that the domestic politics altered sufficiently to take advantage of and to respond positively to the necessary external environmental preconditions. Therefore, the linkage between internal and external in foreign policy making is that the internal politics evolve *partly but not entirely* in response to the external environmental developments.

Therefore, international systems approaches (to be discussed in further detail in this chapter) to International Relations, that only deal with the external environmental developments, are insufficient to explain changes in foreign policy making. For example, Neo-realism assumes that a state's foreign behaviour is a response to the constraints and opportunities provided by the anarchic international system. It follows that to understand a state's foreign policy, there is no need to look within the state for the source of the action. However, the author argues that in the case of complex states, like Israel, it is impossible to account for the shift from war to peace without unpacking the state. In the Israeli case, the nature of the intra-party politics, the block politics, ideology, and the politics of personality are critical to understanding why the domestic scene responded to the international scene in such as way as lead to the decision to make peace.

As a consequence, despite the explanatory power of both Realism and Neo-realism, the author contends that they cannot be utilised to account for Israel's decision to take the path of peace. Hence, theoretical concepts and insights derived from 'middle range'

theories (theories that explain one aspect of foreign policy and those that focus on domestic factors and internal dynamics) are utilised in order to facilitate the study of Israel's move to peace. The most useful is the Bureaucratic Politics Model because it refers to the domestic institutional arrangements but even this is limited because it assumes that a player's stances are motivated entirely by his or her bureaucratic position. Therefore, we need to include additional factors that determine a player's position, such as personality and his or her ideological perspective.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first deals with the issue of the so-called 'level of analysis': a problem common to every researcher. Section two reviews well known approaches utilised by several scholars in the studying of foreign policy behaviour. A third section presents the main concepts which have formed what is known as the 'Bureaucratic Politics Model' as articulated by Graham Allison in his book, *Essence of Decision*.[1] An attempt is also made to critique the Allison model. The final section introduces the concepts (partly derived from the Bureaucratic Politics Approach) that are utilised by this thesis to inform Israel's foreign behaviour with respect to the peace process in the period between 1988 and 1994.

'The Level of Analysis Problem'

There are certain key and familiar questions, which lie behind most studies of foreign policy. These may be posed in the following manner; for example what or who determines a state's foreign policy? Or where should we look for the sources of

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[1] Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971).

explanation of a state's external policy? These are of course difficult questions and it is not easy to obtain a correct or indeed a single answer. Different scholars have suggested various ways to approach such questions and indeed it is quickly apparent that there is no single level of analysis that could explain or predict all aspects of a state's foreign policy behaviour. Furthermore, students of International Relations and foreign policy have not agreed on a multilevel approach to the study of International Relations and foreign policy.

Barry Buzan has however helpfully suggested that three scholars were primarily behind bringing the 'level of analysis' problem into International Relations theory: these were Kenneth Waltz, Morton Kaplan, and David Singer.[2] Buzan is indeed correct that all three have made important contributions to the literature on the making of foreign policy and IR theory more generally.

Kenneth Waltz in his book, *Man the State and War*, which was published in 1959, identifies three possible levels that a researcher might consider in an explanation for the outbreak of wars in the international system. These, he argues, are the individual, state, and international levels.[3] Waltz contended that the condition of anarchy (the absence of a central authority above sovereign states) in the international system was a permissive factor for the recurrence of war and indeed for the absence of peace. However, he argues that to account for the outbreak of a specific war one should look at (in addition

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[2] Barry Buzan, 'The Level of Analysis Problem Revisited', in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relation Theory Today* (UK: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1995), p.200.

[3] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

to the anarchic international system) other levels of analysis such as the individual and the state. Later, in 1979, in what became perhaps Waltz's most important and influential book he articulated this view that there are two levels operating in the international environment. These were, he claimed, the systemic level and the reductionist level, which includes all other non-systemic variables.[4] By this Waltz meant that we could understand the behaviour of states as a function or outgrowth of their position in the international system. The important point, though, was that all units/states were functionally undifferentiated—that is the internal composition of a state did not in fact matter. As we will go on to see—this thesis disputes that view and points rather to the crucial importance of understanding the internal dynamics of the state.

Morton Kaplan in his book, *System and Processes in International Politics,* which was published in 1964, tries to construct typologies of the international system in terms of the distribution of power or configuration of alliances, and then to infer hypotheses about the behaviours of states from these patterns. He argues more in favour of the adoption of a state level of analysis.[5]

These debates have been important because each or every level of analysis determines the perspective from which a state's policies may be explained. By selecting one level of analysis rather than the other, an analyst relies on certain variables, concepts, and assumptions. This would, therefore, impact, to a considerable degree, on the nature of questions he or she might ask or indeed answer. David Singer correctly grasped this

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[4] Kenneth Waltz, *Theories of International Politics* (Reading, MA; Addison-Wesley, 1979).

[5] Morton Kaplan, *System and Processes in International Politics*, (New York: Wiley, 1964).

problem when he published his important article in 1961 entitled 'Level of Analysis Problem in International Relations.'[6] Singer contends that the choice of one level rather than the other could determine what the researcher might or might not perceive.

In fact, scholars differ on the numbers of the levels of analysis. Waltz suggests three, Singer two, and James Rosenau (a political scientist who wrote on foreign policy analysis) mentions five.[7] For the sake of this chapter, two levels of analysis or two approaches are briefly discussed. These are: first, the outside-in/systemic approaches and second, the inside-out/domestic approaches.

The Outside-In/Systemic Approaches

The 'outside-in' or systemic approach is the traditional one that has been often utilised by researchers in foreign policy analysis. It focuses on the system and, in the main, completely ignores other levels. This approach is rooted in Realism and Neorealism, particularly in the shape of the work of Kenneth Waltz whose views on the levels of analysis were discussed above. Though Realists and Neo-realists exhibit some differing characteristics, in fact they share four basic assumptions.[8] These may be outlined as follows. First, the state is the major actor and thus the major unit of analysis. Second, the state is a 'unitary actor': the state has one policy and the government of the state speaks with one voice. A third assumption is that the state is essentially a 'rational

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[6] David Singer, 'The level of Analysis Problem in International Relations', in Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba (eds.), *The International System: Theoretical Essays*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp.77-92.

[7] James Rosenau, *The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp.108-109.

[8] Paul R. Viotti and Mark V. Kauppi, *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, and Globalism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p.6.

actor'. Indeed the idea of rationality is crucial for understanding Realism. Hence, foreign policy may be explained as the outgrowth of the following

> A rational foreign policy decision-making process would include a statement of objectives, consideration of all feasible alternatives in terms of the existing capabilities available to the state, the relative likelihood of attaining these objectives by the various alternatives under consideration, and the benefits and costs associated with each alternative.[9]

A fourth assumption is that the idea of 'national security' tops the agenda of a state's foreign policy. As a consequence, power, especially military power, is a key concept: one that explains why Realists refer to military and strategic issues as 'high politics' whereas they refer to social and economic issues as low politics.

Hans J. Morgenthau is widely considered as having been the most prominent Realist, especially during the Cold War. His book, *Politics among Nations*, published just after the Second World War and at the beginning of the Cold War, was the first scientific articulation of Realism. Morgenthau stresses the importance of power in relations between states. In addition Morgenthau contends that in order to explain the foreign policy of a state one does not need to actually look within the state.[10] Within Morgenthau's rubric all a rational unitary state seeks is to maximise power.

Both Realists and Neo-realists emphasise that 'anarchy' and the distribution of power among states are the main components of the international system. These two attributes, anarchy and the structure of the international system, have profound implications for

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[9] Ibid., pp.6-7.

[10] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, fifth edition (New York: Knopf, 1973).

decision-makers. The former is responsible for the lack of trust among states and the reliance on power whereas the latter acts as a constraint on leaders of states.

The concept of 'anarchy' has received much attention in the International Relations literature. For Realists, anarchy means the absence of any authority above sovereign states.[11] This is, according to Realists and more particularly Neo-realists, the most significant characteristic underlying the international environment, within which states interact. Robert Art and Robert Jervis, for example, emphasise that anarchy is 'the fundamental fact of international relations.'[12] Because of the absence of a supreme authority that could enforce law, there is no single body that can prevent war. Anarchy is therefore a permissive factor. Kenneth Waltz argues that, in anarchy, wars can happen because there is nothing to prevent their occurrence.[13] As a consequence of this, it follows that the reliance on power was designed to achieve two key values; those of survival and security. The anarchic nature of the international system enhances uncertainty and leads states to be suspicious of the intentions of others. This lack of trust, which is caused by anarchy, causes the so-called 'security dilemma'. The term, 'security dilemma' (which was first coined by John Herz) means that:

> Wherever such anarchic society has existed—and it has existed in most periods of known history on some level—there has arisen what may be called the "security dilemma" of men, groups, or their leaders. Groups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of

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[11] See for example Kenneth Waltz, 1979, op. cit, p.102,

[12] For more details on anarchy, see for example Robert Art and Robert Jervis, *International Politics: Anarchy, Force, Political Economy, and Decision-Making*, second edition (Boston: MA: Little Brown, 1984).

[13] Kenneth Waltz, 1959, op. cit., p.232.

> others. This in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on.[14]

Thus, this level of analysis, which stress the supremacy of variables at the international system level, emphasises that a state behaviour could only be understood and explained by looking at the state as a unitary monolithic rational actor in an anarchic and self help environment. Put simply, states are responding to constraints and opportunities offered by the international system. This is the major determinant of foreign policy and, therefore, the international system shapes state behaviour. It should be noted that this thesis does not seek to disregard the many valuable contributions that Realism has made to the study of the behaviour of states. Indeed, realism has enormous explanatory powers in pointing to the problem/prospects of states in a self-help environment and indeed this thesis recognises the importance of powerful states as actors in peace processes, but it is also useful to think and examine the internal dynamics of states which profoundly influence the making of foreign policy.

Indeed this thesis rejects the notion there is no need to open the 'black box' in analysing states foreign policies because a state's foreign behaviour emerges simply and solely as a response to external stimuli. To argue that the international system alone determines states' behaviours means that all states regardless of their domestic regime, bureaucracy, competition among elites, and difference perceptions of its leaders behave the same. They would in any scenario, according to Arnold Wolfers (an IR theorist), respond

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[14] John H. Herz, 'Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,' *World Politics*, vo.2, no.2 (January 1950), p.157.

similarly to the same objective external situation as though decision-makers are caught in a house on fire, in which every one seeks to escape the fire.[15]

However Wolfers does not specify when decision-makers could define when the house is on fire. To see that a house is on fire or not is subjective. For example, Winston Churchill, it may be argued, saw the house on fire immediately after the rise of Hitler whereas Chamberlain saw the flames only after March 1939.[16] Wolfers therefore neglects the significant of how different leaders' perceptions of reality would affect their judgement about when the house is on fire.

So although, as David Singer argues, the international system level of analysis is the most comprehensive, it has several shortcomings.[17] The emphasis on this level can and has led analysts to exaggerate the influence of the international system on states and simultaneously overlook the impact of the state on the system.[18] Furthermore, as Singer maintains, such a view (of focusing on the international system level) assumes 'a degree of uniformity in the foreign policy operational code, of our national actors.'[19] Focusing on the whole rather than the part in explaining international affairs allows little room for divergence in behaviour amongst states.

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[15] See the metaphor of 'house on fire' in Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p.13.

[16] Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p.20.

[17] David Singer, op. cit., p.80.

[18] For an interesting analysis of how the state can impact on the structure of the system see Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of it: the Social Construction of Power Politics,' *International Organization*, vol.46, no.2 (Spring 1992), pp.391-425.

[19] David Singer, op. cit., p.81.

In fact there have been increasing intellectual and academic challenges to systemic approaches to International Relations and foreign policy analysis. The growing dissatisfaction with the outside-in approaches, caused by the emergence of behaviourism in the 1950s and 1960s, led to the emergence of the 'inside-out' approaches that focus on the state and processes within the state to understand and explain foreign behaviour. It is to this approach that we now turn.

The Inside-Out / Domestic Approaches

In this approach, domestic variables are believed to be of considerable significance for a state's foreign policy. Advocates of this approach contend that, in order to explain the way in which a state behaves, one must look within the state and to the composition of its bureaucracy.[20] Foreign policy behaviour may be accounted for by variations in cultural, social, economic, and domestic politics.

An example of this approach is Marxism, which stresses the significance of how certain classes in a society interact to determine the course of action.[21] The most outspoken work on how internal economic dynamics of a society determines a certain course of foreign policy is Lenin's work on imperialism.[22] In his pamphlet, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin was interested in developing a theory that could explain how the result of the monopolies' control of the main sectors of the economy led

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[20] Graham Allsion, op. Cit.

[21] Robert Jervis, 1976, op. cit., p.21.

[22] For more details see Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (New York: International Publishers, 1939).

to seeking foreign markets for exploitation and colonisation. This, according to Lenin, is what caused war amongst the great powers.

Another example of the significance of domestic factors in foreign policy is presented by Jack Snyder. In his book, *Myths of Empire*, which was published in 1992, Snyder presents a domestic politics model to explain why states tend to declare war and overexpand.[23] His main argument is that those parochial interest groups, such as big business, military and perhaps even foreign offices, benefit from what he terms imperial policies and so they hijack the government to pursue their interests.

Another paradigm or set of concepts which emphasise the significance of individual and societal levels of analysis is Pluralism. On the whole, though Pluralists concur with Realists that the state is an important actor, they consider other non-state actors to be of some significance also. Most interestingly perhaps they take issue with Realists who make a distinction between what constitutes either international and domestic politics. To Pluralists, 'one is an extension of the other.'[24] Pluralists assume that to obtain a full understanding of what governs relations between states, there is therefore a need to analyse the decision-making process.[25]

A powerful version of this approach argues that state' foreign policy is determined solely by domestic factors. Former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, remarked that,

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[23] See Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

[24] Viotti and Kauppi, op. cit., p.196.

[25] Ibid., p.198.

demonstrates the strength of domestic input in that decision. In his words: 'the linkage between the policy preferences of those individuals who made the decision and their bureaucratic position is a more powerful explanation of that decision than any of the alternatives.'[30]

There are therefore certain advantages to this level of analysis. It allows for important differentiation among states in the international system. In short, all states are simply not the same. By looking within the state for the source of certain policies, this approach provides a more detailed knowledge of the uniqueness of each state analysed. Indeed, certainly in this case, material which has been utilised for such an approach permits a more detailed investigation of the process by which foreign policy is formulated.

Approaches to the Study of Foreign Policy

Having outlined some of the main levels of analysis in International relations and how these affect any type of researcher, it is important to see how foreign policy as a sub-field of International Relations has been studied. This section begins by reviewing what we may label the traditional approach. According to Brian White, the attraction of this approach derived from the fact that 'it is based upon conventional and straightforward assumptions about foreign policy.' [31] These assumptions stemmed from the 'state-centric' approach of Realism. The assumptions that the state is a unitary, monolithic

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[30] Ibid., p.25.

[31] Brian White, 'Analysing Foreign Policy: Problems and Approaches,' in Michael Clarke and Brian White (eds.), *Understanding Foreign Policy, The Foreign Policy Systems Approach* (England: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1989), p.10.

actor are the starting point of this approach. Realism also assumes that a state, in an anarchic self-help international system seeks to achieve a range of objectives, the least of which are the goals of security and survival. Hence since the state lives in an anarchic environment, it is the constraints and opportunities that offered by international system rather than internal factors that determine its foreign policy.[32]

Therefore, the Rational Actor Model is the most dominant one. Explanations were offered without detailed attention to the internal mechanisms of the government. According to this approach, the national government is one actor that has one set of goals, one set of options, and one estimate of the consequences for each alternative.[33] According to this approach, state behaviour could be understood from the basic assumption of rationality.[34] Hans Morgenthau, for instance, explained the outbreak of the First World War by saying that it 'had its origins exclusively in the fear of a disturbance of the European balance of power.'[35] It was this fear according to Morgenthau that had led Germany, for instance, to support Austria and led France to support Russia. Morgenthau was able to reach this conclusion by using the rationality

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[32] Both Realism and Neo-realism regard the state as a unitary and monolithic actor. Morgenthau explained the international outcome by focusing on the actions and interactions of units—human nature and the notion of interest defined in terms of power—rather than highlighting the systemic constraints of international politics. However, Kenneth Waltz (Neo-realist) focused on the international system as what conditions the behaviours of states.

[33] Graham Allison, op. cit., p32.

[34] Steve Smith, 1984/5, op. cit., p. 9.

[35] Quoted in Graham Allison, op. cit., p.11.

assumption (the trademark of this approach).[36] Allison argues that most contemporary analysts employ this framework in order to explain certain international events.[37]

Challenges to this dominant traditional approach came from theories that focus on decision-making as an approach to explain foreign policy. The starting point is that the making of foreign policy must be seen as a series of decisions. Unlike what I have termed the traditional approach, these theories challenge the assumptions that a nation-state is a unitary actor and focus instead on the people and the units within the state. These theories assume that decision-makers are not as rational as the Traditional Actor Model posits.

Michael Brecher, along with other scholars, for instance, embarked on a mission to construct a framework that could interrelate concepts and insights provided by different approaches.[38] Brecher studied the foreign policy system of Israel in the first two decades of its establishment.[39] He summarises the decision-making process in terms of input, process, and output. In general, Brecher explores the psycho-cultural environment and links that to Israeli foreign behaviour. Though the framework seems comprehensive, it needs a vast quantity of data to operate the research design and 'it is not at all clear that the insight into foreign policy behaviour that have been generated are

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[36] Ibid., p.11.

[37] Ibid., p.13.

[38] Michael Brecher, Blema Steinberg and Janice Stein, 'A Framework for Research on Foreign Policy Behaviour,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.13, no.1 (1969).

[39] Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

such as to justify the expenditure in research time and effort.'[40] However, the main attack against the dominant approach (Rational Actor Model) came from the Bureaucratic Politics Model, one which is taken up to varying degrees throughout the thesis.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model as a Conceptual Framework

This model is, like so much of IR, a US-based one that offers a perspective that is diametric to the one offered by the Rational Actor Model. It has been primarily utilised to explain decisions made by politicians in times of national crisis. The idea of bureaucratic politics was first developed by Graham Allison in the early 1970s when he studied the 1962 Cuban Missiles Crisis. In his book, *Essence of Decision,* Allison attempts to account for three decisions that made up the whole crisis. These were the Soviets' emplacement of the missiles in Cuba, the American decision to impose a naval blockade, and the eventual Soviet decision to withdraw the missiles from Cuba.

Allison states three propositions about how scholars and others think of and analyse foreign policy behaviours. First, analysts of foreign policy uses implicit conceptual models that have significant consequences for the content of their thought. [41] Second, the dominant approach for explanation and prediction of governments' foreign behaviour is what he terms as the classical/Rational Actor Model.[42] Third, he proposes

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40 Brian White, op. cit., p.23.

41 Graham Allison, op. cit., p.4.

42 Ibid., p.4.

two alternative conceptual models: these are the Organisational Process Model, and the Bureaucratic Politics Model.[43]

These three frames of reference have their own concepts and assumptions that could be utilised by analysts or even laymen to ask questions. Allison argues that the classical/Rational Actor Model (which deal with the state as a rational, unitary actor) is a poor guide to understanding states' foreign policy. In fact he goes as far as to suggest that the Rational Actor Model must be supplemented or supplanted by frames of reference that concentrate on the government.

Allison disagrees with this notion that the actor is unitary. He proposes his third model, the Bureaucratic Politics Model, as the one that is able to better account for decision-making process. The government is by no means a single, unitary actor. It consists of different players with different interests, perceptions, and opinions. Players, while focusing on one strategic issue, keep an eye on different intra-national problems as well.[44] As a consequence the decision is a result of bargaining and negotiation within the government. A decision is not a result of a conscious rational selection of one choice but rather as a result of players engaged in a process of pulling and hauling.[45] Allison likens decision-making to a game of chess. Unlike the Rational Actor Model where players move the chess pieces as one player, the Bureaucratic Politics Approach assumes that the move of the chess is rather *a result* of the power and skill among the conflicting

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[43] Ibid., p.5.

[44] Graham Allison and Morton H. Halperin, 'Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications,' *World Politics*, vol/part 24 (1972), p.43.

[45] Graham Allison, op. cit., p.145.

players.[46] Alison argues that in order to explain an event in foreign policy, one should identify the game, the players, to show the coalition, bargain and compromise.[47]. The main concepts of this approach as articulated by Allison and Morton Halperin are explained below.

The first concept has to do with the basic unit of analysis. A state's decision or action is the basic unit of analysis. This is to be explained not as chosen to solve a problem but rather as a result of bargaining and compromise among the decision-makers within the government.

The second concept is about those players engaged in the decision-making process. The key players are any number of individuals within the government. However, other individuals can be part of this circle either on a regular or an *ad hoc* basis. These players will variably occupy different positions and possess varying perceptions, opinions, and interests. These players are not necessarily equal in power over specific issues.[48]

A third concept is one about what determines the stance of each player. Allison assumes that each player's stand is determined by his position in the government. The aphorism 'where you stand is where you sit' captures this logic. Allison argues, throughout this model, that your support of a course of action is dictated by your position in the

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[46] Ibid., p.145.

[47] Ibid., p.146.

[48] Ibid., p.162

government. However Alison and Halperin later assume that preferences of a player are derived from his/her individual characteristics as well.[49]

The interest of each player is determined by a set of factors. Allison and Halperin categorised these under four headings: 'national security interests, organizational interests, domestic interests, and personal interests.'[50] Nonetheless, individuals might differ over how the national security can be impacted on by a specific matter. Given these four interests, a decision-maker calculates how the 'resolution of this issue may affect his interests. This defines his stakes in the issue at hand. In light of these stakes he then determines his stand on the issue.'[51]

A player's impact on actions is determined by the power he or she enjoys. This depends on three factors. First, bargaining advantage which is derived from the player's control of information, his ability to persuade other players, and his ability to impact other players' 'objective in other games, including domestic political games.[52] Second, the player's skill and will to employ bargaining advantage. Finally other players' perceptions of the first two factors.[53]

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[49] Alison and Halperin, op. cit., p.48.

[50] Ibid., p.48.

[51] Ibid., p.49.

[52] Ibid., p.50.

[53] Ibid., p.50.

Though this approach seems to be very neat and organised, it has been subject to much criticism made by several scholars. The following section is an attempt to critique this approach.

Critique of the Bureaucratic Politics Model

This model has received much attention within the scholarly literature. While much of the critique was favourable, many scholars pointed out weaknesses in both the formulation and the assumptions of the approach.

First, this model is criticised as lacking originality. Some scholars argue that the model is derived from the works of others, specifically those writing in an earlier period on foreign policy: these writers included names such as Schilling, Huntington, Neustadt, and Hilsman.[54] Cornford, for example, remarks that Allison's third model is pure Neustadt.[55] In fact Allison acknowledges the contributions of these writers and as Smith argues Allison's originality lies in the ability to use these previous disparate approaches in one model and in analysing one case study.[56]

Despite Smith's defence of what we might term the originality issue, Allison's account of the Cuban missile crisis is challenged on other grounds. D. Hanfer, for example, claims that his account is factually incorrect. Allison's affirmation that President Kennedy did order the removal of the American missiles in Turkey in 1961 and that he

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[54] Steve Smith, 'Allison and the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Review of the Bureaucratic Politics Model of Foreign Policy Decision-Making,' *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 9, no.1 (1981), p.23.

[55] Ibid., p23.

[56] Ibid., p.13.

was surprised to know that they had not been removed when the crisis broke out is one example. He argues that Kennedy was aware of the presence of the missiles in Turkey during the crisis.[57] Barton J. Bernstein (who wrote on atomic weapons and who is exceptionally controversial), in his analysis of the role of the Turkish missiles, backs Hanfer's argument. He argues that

> Practitioners of the "bureaucratic politics" model develop a vested interest in uncritically accepting such dubious evidence precisely because their model so nicely "explains" it. Thus, the model first helps define the reliability of the evidence and then explains it-a dangerous circular process.[58]

Allison's formulation that 'where you stand depends on where you sit' has also received much criticism. Desmond Ball for example argues that

> In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Allison's bureaucratic politics approach would generally have been unable to have predicted from the basis of a person's position in the bureaucracy, what his position on the question of the missiles in Cuba would be.[59]

Indeed, according to Smith, many members of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (Excom), Robert Kennedy for example, had no 'bureaucratic position' at all and were only brought in for the occasion.[60] Moreover, Allison's Critics pointed out that key bureaucrats such as Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara proposed solutions which did not reflect their bureaucratic positions. Some critics believe that the assumption of 'where you stand depends on where you sit' needs many qualifications. As Art argues that

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[57] Ibid., p.24.

[58] Barton J. Bernstein, 'The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?' *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.95, (Spring 1980), p.103, footnote 24.

[59] Quoted in Steve Smith, 1981, op. cit., p.27.

[60] Ibid., p.27.

> We must qualify it [the assumption] with so many amendments before it begins to work that when it does we may not be left with a bureaucratic paradigm, but may in reality be using another one quite different.[61]

This model has also been attacked by scholars for removing responsibility from the government. It assumes that foreign policy decision-making is a result of the pulling and hauling of the various participants; every participant in the decision-making group could argue that he/she is not responsible. Krasner, for example, holds that if decisions are made in such a manner like this what is the point of mechanisms such as elections. He argues that

> If the bureaucratic machine escapes manipulation and direction even by the highest officials, then...elections are a farce...what sense to vote a man out of office when his successor, regardless of his values, will be trapped in the same web of only incrementally mutable standard operating procedures.[62]

Allison is also attacked for his portrayal of the President as merely one player among others. He presents an analysis of how President Kennedy's choices were influenced by bureaucratic considerations. Allison's emphasis on the bureaucratic bargaining 'fails to distinguish adequately between the positions of the participants.'[63] After all, it is the President who chooses key personnel around him. He appoints them and he could dismiss them. As a result this would be crucial in shaping the final decisions. Nevertheless, in defence of the model, a close look at Allison's model reveals that he never claims that people are equal in power (impact on decision). In addition, the President's appointment of his advisors and key posts does not mean that the influence is

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[61] Quoted In Ibid., p.27.

[62] Quoted in Ibid., p29.

[63] Ole R. Holsti, 'Models of International Relations and Foreign Policy,' *Diplomatic History*, vol.13, no.1 (1989), p.33.

one way. In fact, his advisors could control the flow of information to the President and thus affect his perception of the problem.

Lawrence Freedman criticises Allison for accepting the 'logic-politics' dichotomy.[64] This dichotomy 'identifies alternative, and apparently mutually exclusive routes to policy recognised by whether or not actual disagreement is observed.'[65] Freedman's main argument in his article is that Allison is able to draw a clear-cut distinction between the Rational Actor Model and the Bureaucratic Politics Model only because Allison accepts a dichotomy between logic and politics, which Freedman argues is incorrect. Freedman rather argues that both models are the ends of the same continuum. He adds that since the Allison model is suggested as the only one that can examine internal political factors, this means that he depends on a narrow view of politics.[66] Allison is also criticised for his adoption a narrow view of politics. The adoption of the logic/politics dichotomy resulted in a narrow definition of politics. This is an important flaw in this dichotomy. Freedman argues that 'the preoccupation with visible competition has resulted in a consistent failure to identify any pattern of political relationships intrinsic to the system.'[67] Internal politics is much wider than bureaucratic politics and thus the political aspect of foreign policy needs to

> Refer to something more substantive that the intrusion of the parochial preoccupations of ambitious bureaucrats, suspicious military men and electioneering Presidents and something broader than the attempts

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[64] Lawrence Freedman, 'Logic, Politics and Foreign Policy Processes: A Critique of the Bureaucratic Politics Model', *International Affairs*, vol.52 (1976), p. 436.

[65] Ibid., p.436.

[66] Ibid., p.437.

[67] Ibid., p.444.

> within the establishment to strike bargain that satisfy these divergent preoccupation.[68]

His critics point out that he fails to take into account 'outside' groups and other factors of great importance to decision-makers; such as the Congress, elections and etc.

Though many of the criticisms made of this model do in fact have a degree of validity, they, nevertheless, do not discredit the explanatory power of many of its concepts and assumptions. Therefore, many analytical concepts from this model are utilised to address the case study which forms the substance of this thesis, Israel's peacemaking decision process. Though Allison's model was designed to explain how decisions were made at a time of crisis (i.e. a short period of time), certain concepts are utilised to explain the *process* of why Israel took such a long time to come to this decision. As a consequence, the conceptual approach, to be adopted in this thesis, is designed to describe and explain the long *process*, which took Israel almost three decades.

In the Israeli case, the most important part of the Bureaucratic Politics approach is the intra-party and inter-party politics. This is because in Israel, a small number of politicians make the key decisions. This has been the case because the pattern of patron-client relations depicts the internal dynamics of Labour and Likud, the subordination of the army to civilian control, and of course the political system in Israel. As a consequence, the study takes from this model the idea that individuals are connected to institutions, which *partly* define their positions. The most important institution for foreign policy decision-makers is their party. Therefore, there is a need to focus the study on the evolution of the intra and inter party politics. However, decision-makers

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[68] Ibid., p.448.

are also individuals, raising the need to take account of the impact of personality and personal and party ideologies. Hence, chapters two, three, four, and five establish how the internal dynamics evolved in response to both domestic and external factors, whereas the last chapter focuses on the external developments and how this impacted on the dynamics of internal politics and peacemaking.

Concepts Utilised

The theoretical concepts and insights to be used to conduct this thesis are derived from middle-range theories and, in particular, the Bureaucratic Politics Model as proposed by Allison and Halperin. In this section, the variables of the study are introduced. These are the dependent variable (which is the *process* of making the decision to go ahead with peace) and independent ones (which are the factors that explain the Israeli decision to adopt the path of peace).

The dependent variable, which forms the basis for analysis, is Israel's decision to make peace with the Palestinians and Jordan. However, the research focuses on the *process* that led to the decision. The decision came after decades of conflict and animosity. The basis of this analysis is the period between 1988 and 1994. The thesis contends that peace came about only when major shifts within Israeli domestic politics took place towards the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s. One of the research objectives is to account for these profound changes.

The independent variables are those factors, which combined together, account for the breakthrough in the peace process in 1993-94. Differences in political interests,

perceptions, ideologies, and competition among the ruling elite in successive Israeli governments had prevented Israel from seriously embarking on negotiations with Jordan and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO). As we shall see in the following chapters, severe differences within the National Unity Government (NUG) prevented Israel from negotiating with Jordan in 1987. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir turned down the London Document of April 1987, which was signed by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and King Hussein. Another example of clashes of interest and perceptions among the Israeli elite that precluded Israel's ability to arrive at an agreement with Jordan is when Rabin in his capacity as a Prime Minister (1974-77) could not agree to the 'disengagement' proposals with Jordan for fear that he would lost his post to other more hard-liners (see Chapter Five). Therefore, this study focuses on these themes, as well as on the Intifada.

The main focus of this study is on the actions and policies of the main players within successive governments. Labour ministers receive more attention because they were the driving force of the peace process within Israel. However, not all players had equal power and influence. Therefore, politicians such as Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin were the most influential figures in the whole peace process. Both had their own base of power within the party. These were known as the Peres camp and the Rabin camp.

A player can be a hawk, a dove or a *yonetz* (a Hebrew word to refer to a player who is in the middle of the hawk-dovish continuum). It is important to recognise that this categorisation for the players is exclusively concerned with their stances on issues relevant to national security, war, and peace. Since the June 1967 War, the main debate in Israel has been around the future of the Occupied Territories. The dovish/hawk

division has also involved other issues such as the position towards the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, the use of force, and the perception of the level of threat.[69] The most divisive issue however remains the territorial one.

The terms dove, hawk, and *yonetz* need clarification. Unless otherwise mentioned, these terms refer to the position of Labourites within the party. For instance, a Labourite hawk would have been labelled differently in the context of the whole Israeli political spectrum. For the purpose of this study, a hawkish position would be to the right but close to the centre of the Israeli political spectrum. A hawk would have three characteristics. These are a high sense of threat perception, sceptical to the prospects for achieving peace in the near future and less threatened by the status quo. A dove, in contrast, seems to have lower perception of threat, is more optimistic in the chances of peace with Arab following a major Israeli withdrawal from part of the territories occupied in 1967, and has a great sense of urgency because with no solution to the problem war would be inevitable.[70] A *yonetz* would be in a position between these two categories.

Having outlined the main criteria for placing Labour members on the dove/hawk continuum, its worth mentioning that players' minds change through time. For instance, Peres was an outspoken hawk in the early 1970s. In fact, according to intra-party development, he changed dramatically to such a point that he became an outspoken dove

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[69] Efraim Inbar, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics: Labor Party Position on National Security* (USA and the United Kingdom: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc, 1991), p.1.

[70] Ibid., p.14.

in the Labour Party from mid 1980s onward.

A second important theme of Israeli politics is this notion of the patron-client relationship. In Israeli politics, in particular in the Labour party, a patron-client relationship correctly depicts the relationship between the leaders of the party and other members. A client needs a patron if the former is ambitious and seeks to climb the ladder in the party. A patron, in return, needs a client so as to form his own base of power that could help realising his objectives. This pattern of relationship has been crucial for many Labourites to advance within the party. It is given in Israeli politics that Shimon Peres and Moshe Dayan, for example, were clients of Ben-Gurion. Without his support it might be very difficult for them to get promoted with such speed to the highest political echelons. Yossi Beilin, one of the most articulate Labourite in the last ten years, was a client to Peres. In fact, it was Shimon Peres who 'adopted' him and gave him responsibilities that made him central in the Israeli politics. It remains speculation whether, without the support of Peres, Beilin could have achieved the same political prominence.

The question of what determines players' stands in Israel is an interesting one. Stands and preferences of Israeli policy-makers are traceable to a set of interrelated factors, which in total determine their positions over a specific issue. The first factor is perception. This refers to how decision-makers see the world. As a consequence, decision-makers tend to advocate a course of action according to their perception of reality. Their actions and decisions are the result of their perception of reality, not in response to reality itself. According to Michael Brecher, reality and image may converge

or may diverge. The perception refers to the way they see the external as well as the internal environments.[71]

Ideology is another factor that plays a big role in decision-makers' stands. Ideology in this context means the set of principles and beliefs that guide the thinking of decision-makers. Zionism is the mainstream ideology in Israel. All Israeli parties, except for some religious, Arab, and communist parties, are Zionists. However, Zionism is not a monolithic movement. It has two strands; the Labour and the Right (revisionist) movements. Despite the many differences among Zionists, they all have advocated the right of Jews to claim Palestine. This Zionist ideology is the movement that took upon itself the establishment of Israel in Palestine, and bringing in Jews from the Diaspora. Though its role in foreign policy declined throughout the time, it is important in recruitment to the system and determines who becomes a policy-maker.

The psychological environment is a concept borrowed from Michael Brecher. It consists of two closely related concepts; the first one is the 'attitudinal prism' and the second one is 'elite images'.[72] The attitudinal prism is the lens through which the external and internal environments are filtered. The content of what leaders perceive is the elite image. These two concepts comprise the psychological environment. The prism is shaped by three factors. These are political culture, historical legacy, and personality traits of the elites.[73]

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[71] Michael Brecher, 1971, op. cit., p.12.

[72] Michael Brecher, 1969, op. cit., p.86.

[73] Michael Brecher, 1971, op. cit., p.229.

The pre-eminent aspect of the Israeli political culture is the sense of Jewishness. This has been a very important element that influenced, with varying degree, almost all Israelis. Jewishness is the dominant prism through which Israeli decision-makers view the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Another factor that impacts on decision-makers is their interests. A decision-maker may have different interests while considering a decision. These interests are sometimes crucial in his or her support for a certain course of action. These interests can be personal, partisan, or national. In many cases a clash between the national interest and the personal interest may occur. Many decision-makers, for example, would put their own political interest over other considerations. For example, a few weeks prior to the 1981 general election in Israel, the then Prime Minister Menachem Begin (who feared to lose the election to the more popular Shimon Peres) gave an order to the Israeli Airforce to strike against the Iraqi nuclear reactor. This in fact helped him win a razor thin majority in the Knesset and to form the government. Israeli history is indeed rich with such examples.

Another theme in Israeli politics is competition among the elite. In a competitive party system as in Israel, competing elites can play a very important role in foreign policy. The elite in this state is very ambitious. For example, almost every chief of staff of the Israeli army would think of himself as Israel's future prime minister. The competition among the elite deeply affected their relations and led sometimes to immobilism in foreign policy to the extent that a decision on the territories was put off lest the government fall. For example, the competition between Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon over who would succeed Levi Eshkol and then Golda Meir as prime minister led to the

non-adoption of the Allon Plan (based on trading of land for peace with Jordan) despite the fact that the majority within Labour favoured the plan (see next chapter).

The final set of independent variables is the external factors which are argued to be the necessary condition for initiation of conflict resolution in the Middle East. The demise of the Cold War, the Second Gulf War, the role of the United States and Jordan in Israel foreign policy were the major external factors impacting Israel's peace strategies.

Conclusions

This chapter has presented a brief critical tour of the literature concerning the main approaches for the study of foreign policy. It shows that there is no single level of analysis that can explain all aspects of a state's foreign policy behaviour. While no attempt has been made to show which level of analysis is superior, it is obvious that Realism, Neorealism and any approach that is derived from systemic approaches can not alone explain Israel's position *vis-à-vis* the peace process.

Nevertheless, it is suggested that analytical concepts from middle range theories, the Bureaucratic Politics Model in particular, can be utilised to construct a conceptual framework for explaining the process of Israeli peacemaking. The independent variables for this study are suggested to offer a full explanation of why Israel had decided on the move to peace in the early 1990s, but not before. Though the variables suggested have to do with internal dynamics of Israeli domestic politics, the external variables are also recognised to be necessary conditions for the initiation of conflict resolution in the Middle East.

The next chapter aims at setting the historical background to the Arab-Israeli conflict and Israel's road to peace. Much of the analysis in next chapter will rely on employing concepts discussed above.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROAD TO 1988: INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND THE MAKING OF A PEACE PROCESS

This chapter presents an analytical and historical background of how internal political dynamics in Israel influenced the making of its foreign policy regarding the peace process in the period from 1967 until 1988. This is, of course, the period which forms the historical backdrop to the beginning of the peace process. The reason for starting in 1967 is that this was the year which marked the collapse of the national consensus on matters relating to security issues. Furthermore, we need to look at the years before 1988 to understand that internal dynamics have always been very important to the conduct of Israel's foreign policy. The formulation of Israel's foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the peace process was driven by domestic political dynamics and came as a result of clashing perspectives, conflicting interests, and competition between personalities within successive governments. Hence, several key features in Israel's politics and foreign policy which had a direct impact on the road to the peace process are identified.

Although all states of course have multiple security problems with which to contend, it is argued that the case of Israel is in many ways a unique one. The very survival of the State of Israel and the nature of its security problems derived from both its historic international and domestic positions. These issues of survival and security are taken as key themes. So too, as will be seen, is the role of ideology in the making of Israel's foreign policy over many years.[1] Although the analysis adopts an historical approach,

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[1] For the definition of ideology and Zionism see the previous chapter and Chapter Five.

theoretical or conceptual insights from the bureaucratic politics model are utilised to inform this piece of contemporary history.

This chapter comprises five sections. The first section, which is vital for our understanding and explaining of Israel's positions regarding the peace process in the period after the Six-Day War of 1967, presents a brief historical background of the Arab-Israeli conflict from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 until 1967. A second section deals with Israel's perspectives with regard to peace in the period from 1967-1977. It is worth noting that during this period Labour was the dominant party and therefore an examination of the actual politics of the Labour Party is a necessary precursor to any discussion. A third section explores the public debate in Israel over the newly conquered territories in the first decade of occupation. A fourth section examines the policies of the Likud-led governments in the period from 1977-84. As will be explained, Likud's electoral victory in 1977 was a watershed in Israeli politics with far reaching implications for the prospects for peace. The final section looks at the period during the years 1984-88, during which Israel was governed by a National Unity Government (NUG). It explores how the politics of coalition restricted the government from taking the initiative in the formulation of foreign policy.

A Zero-Sum Struggle, 1948-1967

It should be stressed at the outset that the issue of land has been at the core not just of Israeli conceptions of security but also of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The violent struggle between the Jewish community (*Yishuv*) and the Palestinians from the end of the First

World War until 1948 had been over the issue of land.[2] During this period, Palestine had been ruled under the British Mandate.[3] In 1947, Britain announced that it would not be able to solve the Palestine problem in a manner that would satisfy the Arabs and Jews and therefore would ask the United Nations to find a solution.[4] As a consequence, the United Nations adopted the Partition Plan on November 29, 1947. This plan called for the partition of Palestine into both a Jewish and an Arab state. The Arab countries and in particular the Palestinians however refused to accept this plan. They believed that the plan—which indeed gave the Jews 55 percent of Palestine although their land ownership was only 7 percent—was pro-Zionist and would not bring justice for the Palestinians.[5] Hence, the period between November 29, 1947 to May 15, 1948 witnessed a continuous series of armed clashes between Palestinians and Jewish forces. Though the Palestinians enjoyed a demographic advantage of 1.3 million as opposed to 650,000 Jews, they were in an inferior position militarily.[6] Unlike the well-equipped Jewish forces, the Palestinians forces were poorly equipped and suffered from a lack of unity. As a consequence the Palestinians lost the war and subsequently were driven from their

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[2] There is a vast literature on the origin of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the 1948 war. The following are just example: Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, The Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), Uri Bar-Joseph, *The Best of Enemies: Israel and Transjordan in the War of 1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1987), and Ilan Pappe, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-51* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1992), Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1992), Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* (New York, Patheon Books, 1987), Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), and Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999).

[3] For the role of Britain in the Arab-Israeli conflict see Ilan Pappe, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

[4] For a thorough analysis of Britain's decision to refer the Palestinian problem to the United Nations see Ritchie Ovendale, *Britain, the United States, and the End of the Palestine Mandate, 1942-1948* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1989), pp.181-216.

[5] For more details see Walid Khalidi, op. cit., pp.16-81.

[6] Benny Morris, 1999, op. cit., p.192.

homes (which were located throughout what had become known as Israel). The exodus of hundreds of thousands of refugees, the fall of hundreds of Palestinian villages, and the consequent tremendous public pressure in the Arab World created conditions that made war between Israel and the Arab states seem inevitable.[7] Due to the imbalance of military power between the two sides, Israel secured victory in the 1948 War.[8] The victory was attributed to Israel's ability to deploy more troops, its ability to procure weapons during the war as opposed to the Arabs' inability to acquire more weapons, and the fragmentation, lack of co-ordination and rivalry among the Arab leaders.[9] However, the Arab Legion (the Jordanian army) was able to accrue most of the territories allocated to the Arabs according to the Partition Plan.[10] These territories were annexed to Jordan and became known as the West Bank of Jordan.

The 1948 War (which was started on May 15, 1948) was ended officially by the signing of the armistice agreements in 1949, which were brokered by the United Nations. The fighting between Israel and Jordan ended in the summer of 1948. Around 6,000 Jews were killed during the war and twice this number were injured.[11] These figures were

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[7] Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1992), p.77.

[8] The Israeli side enjoyed the numerical superiority at each stage of the war. For example, in mid-May 1948, the total number of the Israeli forces was over 35,000 troops whereas the total number of Arab troops, both regular and irregular was under 25,000. For more details about the military balance between the two sides see Avi Shlaim, 'Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948,' in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.79-103.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Eugene L. Rogan, 'Jordan and 1948: The Persistence of an Official History,' in Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim, op. cit., pp.104-124.

[11] Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp.2-3.

significant because the total number of Israelis at that time was some 650,000 Jews. So those killed represented almost one percent of the population.

Israel took advantage of the war and expanded beyond the parameters allocated to it in the Partition Plan. It actually occupied 2500 square miles of what, according to the Partition Plan, should have been an Arab state.[12] Following the war, Israel neither agreed to give the territories back to the Arabs nor to allow refugees to return to their homes.[13] The Arabs continued to insist on these two demands in exchange for a peace settlement. As a consequence of these differing views, the conflict became what might be termed a zero-sum struggle. It should be noted that in this period, Israel's foreign policy *vis-à-vis* its neighbours was affected by a number of issues that were to prove enduring, primarily those of the refugee problem and the problem of borders. These two issues remained as the main source of friction and provoked military clashes between Israel and its neighbours. It should be stressed at this point that although Jordan is not the centre of this thesis, Jordan was the only country the Israelis considered to be a potential partner for peace. Hence, some focus on Jordan in this section helps illuminate Israeli foreign policy towards the peace process.

It is a perennial claim of the Israelis that peace has been a main goal of Zionism and that Israel did indeed seek peace with its neighbours after the 1948 War. Peace failed in this version of history because quite simply the Arabs remained intransigent. However, this rather stark claim, as recent debates have shown, cannot actually withstand historical

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[12] Mordechai Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace: A History of the Israeli Peace Movement* (Washington, D.C: United States Institute for Peace Press, 1996), p.4.

[13] Ibid., pp.5-6.

scrutiny. In particular some of what have been termed the New Historians[14] have contested the official Israeli narrative. Avi Shlaim, for example, argues that Israeli leaders in the 1950s, especially the Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, were not interested in peace because this would put an end to the conflict with the Arab states and a solution would mean that Israel could not expand its borders in the future. So again, according to this version, Israel was seeking security through expansion. Shlaim reinforces his argument by presenting an example of Israel's rejection of peace with the Arabs. He points out that in 1949, Husni Za'im of Syria, proposed the settlement of 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria in return for a peace treaty with Israel but this offer was in fact rejected by Ben-Gurion.[15] Za'im even proposed a meeting with Ben-Gurion to talk about a solution but Ben-Gurion gave a negative answer. This response was, according to Avi Shlaim, 'characteristic of [his] general preference for force over diplomacy as a means of resolving disputes between Israel and the Arabs.'[16] Moshe Sharett, the then Foreign Minister (1948-56), argues that the school of thought represented by Ben-Gurion, believed that peace was not vital and that Israel would actually not lose if the conflict were to be inconclusive.[17]

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[14] 'New Historian' is a term that refers to Israeli scholars who challenged the Israeli official account of the 1948 war. Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe, Avi Shlaim, and Simha Flapan are representatives of this term. These scholars, drawing on Israeli archives, challenged the standard Zionist narrative of the 1948 war and the flight of hundred of thousands of Palestinian refugees.

[15] Avi Shlaim, 'Husni Za'im and the Plan to Resettle the Palestinian Refugees in Syria,' *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol.XV, no.4 (Summer 1986), p.71.

[16] Ibid., p.73.

[17] Ibid., p.75.

Judging by Israel's actual policies in the 1950s, Shlaim is correct in his analysis.

Indeed, if Ben-Gurion was a central figure during the first two decades of Israel's establishment, internal politics as well as the politics of personality played a great role in *deciding Israel's foreign policy towards the Arab neighbouring Arab states.*[18] *Israel's* behaviour in this period was in many ways a result of an internal debate and a dispute between two alternative approaches within the Mapai Party[19] (Mapai was the dominant party in Israel, which later became the Labour Party and was also the leading party in Israeli governments until 1977). Two schools of thought were visible within the Mapai Party. The first school of thought was the 'Activist' (*bit'honistim*, the security minded one) and the second was the 'Moderate'. The main supporters of the first approach within Mapai were Ben-Gurion and Moshe Dayan.[20]

The 'Activists' assumed that the Arabs were predominantly interested in the destruction of Israel. As a consequence of this, it was believed that Israel was destined to live in an environment of permanent hostility and therefore there was little choice but to rely on raw military power for survival. Ben-Gurion summarised this position when he said shortly after the 1948 War:

> If I were an Arab leader I would never accept the existence of Israel. This is only natural. We took their land. True, God promised it to us, but what does it matter to them? There was anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was it their fault? They only see one thing: we

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[18] For more details see Ranan D. Kuperman, 'The Impact of Internal Politics on Israel's Reprisal Policy During the 1950s,' *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol.24, no.1 (March 2001), pp.1-28.

[19] Ibid., p.1.

[20] Moshe Dayan was a close ally to Ben-Gurion and a chief of staff from 1953-57. He was known for his hawkish stance and he masterminded the 1956 campaign in Sinai. He assumed the defence portfolio in the period between 1967 and 1974, and became the Foreign Minister from 1977 until 1980.

> came and took their land. They may forget in a generation or two, but for the time being there is no choice.[21]

Further more, the 'Activists' believed that the Arabs understood nothing but the language of force (the physical use of force) and so for Israel to survive, it had to demonstrate the ability to deploy force effectively from time to time.[22] Proponents of this school believed that peace could come only when the Arabs clearly understood that Israel could not be militarily defeated.[23]

The second school, the 'Moderate', was associated with Moshe Sharett.[24] He argued, during his tenure as both Foreign Minister and Prime Minister in the 1950s, that 'moderation' was better than retaliation and stressed that Israel should restrain its responses because retaliation would not solve its security problems. It should be noted that security was not just an issue of territory but also there was, to the Israeli mind, a problem of infiltration. This consisted of Arab actions, such as returning to their villages to retrieve possessions left behind in the original expulsion (1947-48) but also the acts of revenge.[25] These actions were indeed carried out by Palestinian refugees and although this was arguably a low-level threat to security made by non-state actors, it constituted yet another threat to the Israeli State.

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[21] Quoted in Mark Heller, *Continuity and Change in Israeli Security Policy* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.10.

[22] Benny Morris, op. cit., p.228.

[23] For a through analysis of this position, see Benny Morris, op. cit.

[24] Moshe Sharett was Foreign Minister from 1948-56 and also a Prime Minister from 1954-55. His resignation from the government in 1956 came as a result of the incompatibility of his moderate views and policies and that of the Activists.

[25] Benny Morris, op. cit., p.228.

The 'Moderates' were in fact not actually against using force, but instead favoured a more selective and controlled use of force and only after considering its political implications. They were arguably more sensitive to both world opinion and to Arab feelings. Proponents of the moderate approach argued that in order to create a climate conducive to reconciliation, Israel should not alone rely on the use of force lest this would inflame the Arab hatred towards Israel and as a consequence destroy any prospect of reconciliation.[26]

However, differences between the two approaches were tactical and not strategic. The main bone of contention between these two groups was over how to solve the problem of infiltration. Indeed in the main it is probably worth noting that all Israelis made a distinction between two types of security. The first one was what we might call 'basic security', threats which threatened the very existence of the state. The second one was the current or day-to day security, which threatened what we might call the *personal* security of Israelis. It did not actually seem to pose a serious threat to the existence of the state, but provocations and border incursions proved destabilising to Israeli society.[27]

Due to Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's dominant and decisive character (the impact of personality in Israeli politics is the focus of Chapter Five), the Activist school was dominant during the first two decades of Israel's history. Indeed, Ben-Gurion's views were so strong that they formed the heart of the Israeli national security concept. His assumptions about security, which dominated the political scene even after he was forced

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[26] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World* (Great Britain: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2000), p.87.

[27] For the impact of this problem on Israel, see Benny Morris, op. cit.

to resign in 1963, 'produced what has been called 'the Ben-Gurion complex'—the attempts by other leaders to make decisions based on their guesses about what the 'old man' [Ben-Gurion] would say.'[28]

To sum up, Israel's foreign policy towards its neighbours can be viewed from the very inception of the state as a zero-sum game. It was driven by its quest not just for security but also for expansion. Israel's unwillingness to concede land and to repatriate the refugees coupled with its dissatisfaction with its eastern border (its borders with Jordan) characterised its approach towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. So too its preoccupation with infiltration. However, the Six-Day War changed Israel's strategic environment and more importantly gave the domestic variables primacy. As we shall see below, Israel's victory in this war led to two important outcomes that, indeed, greatly increased the domestic input in Israel's foreign policy. First, it produced internal challenges to the Ben-Gurionist conception of national security. Secondly, and more importantly, Ben-Gurion's notion of *mamlachtiut*[29] was challenged.[30] The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza led to the ascendance of an ethno-nationalism (forces that did not regard territories as a means to achieve security but as an end in itself) and therefore posed an ideological challenge to the traditional concept of security.[31] The Zionist right considers Israel's right to claim the West Bank on a historical and religious basis rather than on the

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[28] Mark Heller, op. cit., p.17.

[29] *Mamlachtiut* is a term that refers to Ben-Gurion emphasis on the primacy of the state over other possible bases of identities.

[30] For more details about *mamlachtiut* during the statehood, see Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class and Shaping of Modern Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), part three.

[31] Mark Heller, op. cit., p37.

state- based concept of security, which considers land as a major component of security. It was only in 1967 that the Zionist right forces, driven by a revisionist strand, were sharing power.

From Zero-Sum to Mixed-Motive Relations, 1967-1977

Israel, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War found itself in a profoundly changed strategic environment. It achieved a stunning military victory against its adversaries and in addition to its occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza, Israel captured Egyptian and Syrian territories, most notably those of Sinai and the Golan Heights. Israel's occupation of these territories changed the conflict from a zero-sum to a mixed-motive one. The captured territories were to become the focus of the Arab-Israeli peace process. Hence, Israel's policies towards Jordan and the peace process were, in this period, no longer what may be described as zero-sum ones.

It is in this period that we see clearly that the formulation of Israel's foreign policy *vis-à-vis* the peace process was driven by domestic political dynamics and came as a result of clashing perspectives and competition between personalities within successive governments. We have already noted the importance of Ben-Gurion but the impact of the internal input in Israel's foreign policy became acute during and following the 1967 War. A few days before the outbreak of the Six-Day War, the Israeli Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol, responded to intense public, as well as army, demands , which asked for the appointment of Moshe Dayan as Defence Minister and formed a National Unity

Government (NUG). Moshe Dayan of Rafi[32] assumed the defence portfolio and Menachem Begin, the leader of Gahal,[33] a man known for his hawkish stance concerning the West Bank, was appointed a Minister without portfolio. The formation of the NUG, although completed under pressure, was meant to provide Israel with effective leadership at a time of crisis. As a consequence there was no bargaining or agreement among the coalition members over domestic or foreign policies.[34] After the war, the main concern for Eshkol and indeed Golda Meir, who succeeded him a Prime Minister in February 1969, was to maintain national unity. This goal made it impossible for the government (as we will see later in this section) to officially and publicly offer Jordan any type of plan for territorial compromise. This Israeli paralysis was a result of several factors, not the least of which was the ideological affinity that some factions of the government, the Gahal bloc in particular, had and still maintain towards the West Bank of Jordan.[35] Thus, the Prime Minister's role was to hold the balance between the conflicting opinions and personalities within the government, which meant in practice that the government could not adopt a clear policy towards the newly captured territories. Successive Labour-led governments favoured the status quo rather than adopting for certain a policy that might lead to the fall of the government and worse to the fragmentation of the

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[32] Rafi is a party that was formed in 1965 by Ben-Gruion, Dayan, and Peres after their defection from Mapai.

[33] Gahal is a bloc that was formed in 1965. It consisted of Herut and Liberal parties, which became Likud in 1973.

[34] Gershon Kieval, *Party Politics in Israel and the Occupied Territories* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1983), p.4.

[35] Dan Schueftan, *A Jordanian Option: the "Yishuv" and the State of Israel vis-à-vis the Hashemite Regime and the Palestinian National Movement* (Tel Aviv: Kibbutz Hamiuchad, 1987), p.299, (in Hebrew).

Labour Party and the loss of its dominance in Israel's politics. Indeed, the territorial issue proved to be the most divisive in Israeli politics.

The issue of the Occupied Territories changed the nature of the conflict to what might be described as a mixed-motive one. Israel's occupation of the Arab territories put Israel in a strong bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the Arab states. The newly conquered territories had given Israel the potential to offer the land back to the Arab states in exchange for peace. Hence, on June 19, 1967, the Israel government took a dramatic decision when it called for the return of Sinai to Egypt with a special arrangement of Sharm al-Sheikh, and the return of the Golan Heights to Syria, in return for peace.[36] This decision did not however include Jordan, the West Bank or even Gaza. Yet, the decision was annulled when the Arab leaders, who met in Khartoum's summit in September 1967, took the so-called 'Three-No' decision: no to negotiations, no to recognition, and no to peace with Israel. The so-called Khartoum resolutions had a tremendous impact on 'the delicate balance of forces in the government and public opinion.'[37] Doves within the Israeli government, such as Foreign Minister Abba Eban, were disappointed because the Khartoum decision implied that the Arab leaders were not yet ready for direct negotiations with Israel and signalled that, given the dynamics of Israeli politics, the rejection might mean that the doves would be losing ground. The 'Three-Nos' decision did indeed weaken the dovish trend in the Israeli government and simultaneously strengthened the hawkish one, which argued for the retention of the territories on security, historical, and religious considerations. The latter refers to the claim by Jews

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[36] Avi Shlaim and Avner Yaniv, 'Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy in Israel,' *International Affairs*, vol.56 (Spring 1980), p.243.

that Palestine was the promised land and therefore they have an eternal right to establish their state on the whole of Palestine. The ascendance of religious parties—which saw Israel's victory in the 1967 War as the beginning of the redemption and the advent of the Messiah—has been one of the factors that hindered the peace process. In the religious circles, the West Bank is the heart of the biblical land and no government is authorised to concede it. In fact religion should not be underestimated as a factor in these territorial disputes.

The eastern border with Jordan was the main source of security concerns to Israeli governments. On the whole, Israeli leaders believed that the eastern front (the border between Israel and Jordan) was by far the most dangerous to Israel's security. Israel, in its pre 1967 borders, lacked a strategic or tactical depth needed to assure its security. The entire width between the coastal areas and the green line, Israel's pre-1967 borders with Jordan, varies to less than ten to fifteen miles.[38] Its size, according to Israeli governments, rendered it strategically vulnerable to a surprise attack from the east. For this reason, most Israelis were adamantly opposed to withdrawal to the pre-1967 borders especially in the West Bank. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967, which was to become the basis for future peacemaking efforts in the Middle East, asked *inter alia* that Israel withdraw to 'secured and recognised borders'. This resolution came after the United States and the Soviet Union co-operated in the Security Council in order to pave the way for peace in the Middle East. It is worth noting here that such external intervention was to become crucial in the post-Six-Day

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[37] Amnon Sella & Yael Yishai, *Israel the Peaceful Belligerent, 1967-79* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1986), p.11.
[38] Yigal Allon, "Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 55 (1976), p.42.

War era for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unlike the Arab states, which interpreted Resolution 242 to mean a total Israeli withdrawal from *all* territories occupied in the June War, Israeli governments interpreted the resolution to mean withdrawal from some territories, *not all* territories.

Accordingly, successive Israeli cabinets understood that changes were to be introduced to the 1949 armistice lines so as to make Israel's borders defensible. A strategic consensus was developing in the wake of the Six-Day war that connected security and topography. For Israeli strategists, territory was the crucial component of the state's security. Yigal Allon (who was a hero of the 1948 War, Deputy Prime Minister during the June War up to 1974 and Foreign Minister in Rabin's first government, which lasted from 1974 to 1977) argued that Israel should withdraw to defensible borders in order to rectify its strategic weakness. In his words: 'the purpose of defensible borders is thus to correct this [strategic] weakness, to provide Israel with the requisite minimal strategic depth, as well as lines which have topographical strategic significance.'[39] However, successive Labour-led cabinets were not monolithic in their views concerning the scope of the expected withdrawal.

Accordingly, Labour Cabinets before 1977 failed to adopt a clear policy with regard to the future of the territories occupied during the Six-Day War. Apart from the Allon Plan, which was proposed in July 1967 by the then Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon, no other plan was suggested and accepted. The Allon Plan envisaged establishing settlements in the Jordan valley, retaining a strategically vital strip along the River

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[39] Ibid., p.42.

Jordan for security considerations, and conceding densely populated areas of the West Bank to Jordan in return for a peace treaty.[40] It mentioned nothing about the occupied area of East Jerusalem, which had been annexed in June 1967. The rational behind the Allon Plan was to control and annex territories without necessarily incorporating almost 600,000 Palestinians into Israel. Annexing all of the West Bank and incorporating its population would have affected the very Jewishness of the State of Israel, as more Palestinians in Israel would have made it a bi-national state instead of a Jewish one. Though tacitly accepted by majority of Labour, the Allon Plan was never adopted formally by the government for fear of breaking-up the NUG.

However, the plan did act as a guideline settlement policy of Labour governments before 1977. The plan envisaged co-operation with Jordan to prevent the emergence of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza through relinquishing parts of the West Bank, which would be incorporated into Jordan.[41] That was the essence of the so-called the 'Jordanian option', which it was envisioned would solve the Palestinian problem by partitioning the West Bank between Israel and Jordan. The Jordanian option later became the Labour Party's preferred policy to the Palestinian problem. Though on the whole the Labour Party preferred dealing with Jordan over the future of the West Bank, there were different views within Labour that actually prevented the advancement of this Jordanian option. The following section explores these different views in the context of the debate within Labour and indeed in Israel over the political future of the occupied territories.

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[40] Yeroham Cohen, *The Allon Plan* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Hamuechad, 1972), pp. 19-22. (In Hebrew).

[41] James A. Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East,* fourth edition (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1994), p.326.

The Public Debate in Israel

The conquest of the territories therefore opened up a divisive debate in Israel over their disposition. The public debate revolved around the attainability of peace and the future borders of Israel in case of peace, and centred on the political future of the Occupied Territories. This debate led to the emergence of doves and hawks that cut across parties' lines and this, in turn, caused the inability of successive Labour-led governments to build a workable consensus with regard to peace. The conflicting views, personal rivalry among top leaders, and competition for power within Israeli governments made it difficult to establish clear policies and thus caused a degree of what might be described as immobilism in the making of Israeli foreign policy. Prime Minister, Levi Eshkol was adamant in 1967 that Israel would not relinquish land until the Arabs accepted Israeli pre-conditions: direct negotiations to arrive at a peace treaty that recognised Israel's secure borders.[42] Eshkol realised that there was no need to take a decision and run the risk of splitting the party when there was no partner who was ready to accept Israeli dictations. Avi Shlaim rightly argues that this

> formula, which served as the basis for Israeli diplomacy for the next six years [1967-73], simply stated Israel's maximal demands for perfect peace and perfect security. It did not [however] represent a realistic strategy for initiating dialogue with Israel's adversaries.[43]

The governments' inability to take decisions was also affected by the battle over whom would succeed Eshkol and later Golda Meir as the leader of the Labour Party and Prime

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[42] Avi Shlaim, 1980, op. cit., p.242.

[43] Ibid., p.243.

Minister. This was a disruptive battle between two prominent Labour members and Cabinet Ministers, Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon. As a consequence, the status quo (a term used here to refer to Israeli indecision about the future of the West Bank and Gaza) was a function of these factors

To understand Israel's policy towards the peace process in the post Six-Day War, one should examine the interplay of four main positions or schools of thought formulated by different parties and factions and which were represented within successive Israeli governments. These were reconciliationist, functionalist, territorialist, and annexationist.[44] The first three positions were represented by the Labour Party's three factions (Mapai, Rafi, and Achdut Havooda) respectively.

The reconciliationist position, which was the dovish one, was clustered around Pinhas Sapir (the Minister of Finance) and Abba Eban (the Minister of Foreign Affairs). Both were from Mapai. This group argued that the retention of the populated Arab lands would be a catastrophe for Israel.[45] Advocates of this approach were more concerned about the nature of the Jewish State. They employed both demographic and ethical arguments. They believed that the permanent retention of the Occupied Territories would lead to the flooding of the Israeli market by cheap Arab labour. This, in turn, would lead to the transformation of the Jewish State into a colonial state or worse, given

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[44] Yehuda Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p.6.

[45] Samuel J. Roberts, *Party and Policy in Israel, the Battle Between Hawks and Doves* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), p.45.

the Arab superior birth rate, would eventually lead to an Arab majority.[46] Israel, according to this reasoning, would become a *de facto* bi-national state. In either case Israel would cease to be a Jewish state. Advocates of the reconciliationist school of thought thus concluded that giving up the Occupied Territories would be in Israel's best interest.[47]

The second position was the functionalist. This group was the most hawkish one within the Labour party. It was represented by Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres of Rafi, along with members of Achdut Havooda. Moshe Dayan was very pessimistic about the prospect of a peace with Jordan. As a consequence of this, he advocated a functionalist approach to the territories under occupation. This group downplayed the importance of the demographic argument by arguing that any such problem could be solved through increasing Jewish immigration or by the provision of Jordanian citizenship to the inhabitants of the West Bank.[48] This group promoted the idea of the integration of the West Bank into the Israeli economy. The point here was to raise living standards and to make the occupation more acceptable. Moshe Dayan, in his capacity as Defence Minister, initiated the 'open bridges' policy with Jordan. This policy, which was intended to serve as a 'pressure release valve'[49], allowed Palestinians in the West Bank to be in touch with their brethren in Jordan. Rafi and Gahal supported Dayan's policies on the West Bank in the Cabinet discussions. This approach was opposed by the

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[46] Ibid., p.46.

[47] Yehuda Lukacs, op. cit., p.14.

[48] Samuel Roberts, op. cit., p.46.

[49] Yehuda Lukacs, op. cit., p.6.

reconcilationsts, in particular the Minister of Finance Sapir, who described Dayan's policies as 'creeping annexation'.

The third position, which came in between the aforementioned positions, was 'territorialist' one. It tried to balance security needs and the requirement to keep the Jewish character of Israel.[50] The prominent spokesman of this group was Deputy Prime Minister Yigal Allon of Achdut Havooda. The majority within Achdut Havooda supported Yigal Allon. Advocates of this school of thought contended that territory is a crucial component of security. They sketched out which land should be retained and which lands should be given to Jordan in the context of a peace settlement. The Allon Plan, which was never actually adopted as a party policy when Labour was in power, was incorporated into the party platform in 1977. This Plan which envisioned a Jordanian role in the settlement of the Palestinian problem however became redundant in 1992 when Labour won the general election and adopted a more reconciliationist view that stressed the centrality of the Palestinian option.

The fourth position was the annexationist. The Gahal/Likud advocated this approach. This position, as we shall see later in this chapter, was anti-Jordan. Menachem Begin refused the idea of negotiating with Jordan simply because, according to him, there was nothing to negotiate.[51] Likud advocated the annexation of the West Bank into Israel. This party was driven by a revisionist Zionist ideology that deemed the West Bank of Jordan as integral part of the biblical land. Begin supported Dayan's policies in the West

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[50] Gershon R. Kieval, op. cit., p. 10.

[51] Yehuda Lukas, op. cit., p.10.

Bank and Gaza because they did not preclude the option of annexing the territories later. Indeed Begin's participation in the NUG was designed to prevent any concession to Jordan in the West Bank. A more extreme version of this school, championed by Ariel Sharon, was extremely anti-Jordan. It believed that establishing a Palestinian state in Jordan was the optimum solution to the Palestinian problem.

Dayan and the other hard-liners were at this point a minority within Labour. However, they did hold disproportionate power *vis-à-vis* the majority moderates. Theoretically, Dayan and his supporters could withdraw from the government and join the opposition. This could have led to the fall of the government and might have provided a chance for Dayan to lead a Rafi-Gahal bloc. Had Dayan decided to leave Labour, he—with his brilliant military record coupled with his popularity among the Israeli public—could have greatly diminished the chances of Labour's electoral victory. The moderates had no potential partner to their left and thus were scared of losing power if Dayan decided to defect.[52] Indeed what prevented Dayan from seceding from Labour was his ambition to be a Labour Party's leader and Prime Minister of Israel.

The Labour-led governments were vulnerable to Dayan's implicit threat to withdraw if his demands were not met. Two examples are sufficient in this regard. Before the 1969 Knesset election the Labour Party adopted the Oral Law, which reflected Dayan's position over the future of the Occupied Territories. The Oral Law was a statement on territorial aims. These aims were the following: Jordan River as Israel's security border,

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[52] Gershon R. Kieval, op. cit., p.77.

the control of Gaza, the Golan Heights, and Sharm al-Sheikh.[53] During the 1973 election the Labour Party was forced to adopt the Galili Document in its electoral platform, which reflected Dayan's demands. It called for the development of the economy and infrastructures of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories; the growth of economic ties between the Palestinians in the territories and Israel; the encouragement of Jewish settlement and the development of rural and urban settlement in Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Jordan Valley, and the continuation of the open bridge policy. These two instances illustrate that the idea of majority and minority within Labour was, to some extent, irrelevant for decision-making. A hawkish minority was able to force a course of action against the wishes of the moderate majority within the Labour Party.

Even so, the situation was far more complicated than that of mere internal differences within Labour. To account fully for Israel's policy preferences for the territorial status quo in the West Bank, we need to understand the transformation of the 'historical partnership' between the Labour Party and the National Religious Party (NRP, also known in Hebrew as Mafdal). First of all, the NRP had taken part in all Labour-led governments since the establishment of the state up to 1977. Before the Six-Day War, the NRP had focused on religious issues and had followed Mapai in all national security and foreign policy matters. As a consequence their partnership was maintained without serious trouble. However, the occupation of the West Bank triggered a change within the NRP. The NRP became more hawkish and increasingly sought to influence foreign policymaking. These new changes had jeopardised the sustainability of the historical partnership between the NRP and Labour. The change in NRP's traditional position

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[53] Ibid., p.32.

could be attributed to changes in the internal balance of forces. The Youth[54] (younger generation with a more hawkish inclinations) in the party, who were more concerned with the retention of the West Bank, became more influential. The veterans of the NRP feared that the Youth would take over if their party did not act to prevent any Israeli future withdrawal from the West Bank. As a consequence, the leadership of the NRP, responding to pressures exerted by the Youth, linked their participation in the government to the retention of the West Bank and Gaza. This position coincided with the establishment of Gush Emunim[55] (the Block of Faithful) in February 1974 initially as a pressure group within the NRP.[56] Suffice to indicate that Gush Emunim derived its ideology from the teachings to the late Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook who emphasised that the primary purpose of the Jewish people was to attain both the spiritual and the physical redemption by dwelling in and building up the land of Israel.[57] That is the reason why this extra-parliamentary movement, Gush Emunim, focused on the issue of settlements.

The Labour leaders could not take the support of the NRP for granted if they decided to negotiate a peace settlement with Jordan. In 1974, for example, the Central Committee of the NRP adopted a resolution that the party would oppose in both the cabinet and the

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[54] Many of the youth studied at Merkaz Harav in Jerusalem, and were taught by Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, a son of Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook. Rabbi Tzvi Kook succeeded his father and took over the leadership of the adherents of messianic ideology.

[55] Gush Emunim was established in March 1974 at a meeting at Kfar Etzion near Hebron. It was set up in reaction to the territorial concessions Rabin made to the Egyptians within the framework of the first disengagement agreement signed in January 1974. This group enjoyed the support of the NRP who threatened at the time that any territorial concessions in the West Bank would force them to leave the government. Rabin, who had not yet consolidated his authority, conceded.

[56] Gush Emunim severed its links with the NRP several months after its establishment.

[57] For more details see Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).

Knesset any withdrawal from the West Bank.[58] This explains why, following the December 1973 election, which came after the October War, the NRP placed their participation in the government conditional on Prime Minister Golda Meir's undertaking that her government would not enter into negotiations over the West Bank. Meir, recognising the indispensability of the NRP in coalition formation, gave in. Rabin had to provide the same pledge in 1974.

Therefore, Rabin was severely constrained by domestic political considerations. When he assumed the premiership in 1974, he faced several internal problems that prevented him from negotiating an interim agreement with Jordan. The opposition from Likud, the NRP, and hawks within Labour to concessions concerning the West Bank was effective. Any concession to Jordan could have alienated the NRP. Given the indispensability of the NRP to the government, Rabin ruled out any settlement with Jordan following the 1973 War despite Kissinger's request that Israel concede Jericho for a disengagement agreement with Jordan. In addition, the Israeli negotiating team for an agreement with Jordan was made up of Prime Minister, Rabin, Foreign Minister, Yigal Allon, and Defence Minster, Shimon Peres, all of whom held different views on the negotiations between Jordan and Israel. Peres, who represented the functionalist approach, argued that there was no urgency to conclude an agreement because Jordan and Israel had come to a tacit understanding to manage the West Bank affairs. He rather advocated the continuation of the status quo and argued that Jordan and Israel could arrive at a peace treaty 'if the status quo became untenable.'[59] Yigal Allon was the most dovish among

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[58] Samuel J. Roberts, op. cit., p.61.

[59] Yehuda Lukacs, op. cit., p.130.

them and represented the territorialist approach, which favoured an agreement with Jordan. To Yigal Allon, such an agreement would help prevent Arab forces from amassing troops on the two sides of the River of Jordan and thus would prevent a war between Jordan and Israel.[60] Rabin, who advocated an agreement with Egypt, refused to withdraw from the West Bank. He wanted an Israeli military presence in the West Bank and offered Jordan only a civil administration in the West Bank. Rabin feared any concession to Jordan would strengthen the position of his arch-rival Peres. As a result of these conflicting views and the personal competition with Shimon Peres, the talks with Jordan ultimately failed.

To sum up, one could argue that Israel's foreign policy was determined largely by internal political dynamics. Intra-party differences, personal rivalry within successive governments, and inter-parties conflicting dispositions were all responsible for the immobilism in the making of Israel foreign policy concerning peace. Hence successive Labour-led cabinets were in no position to take up final and clear decisions regarding the political future of the Occupied Territories. A clear decision in this regard would have tipped the internal balance within Labour or even worse would have led to a split in the party. This would in turn have exacerbated the position of the Labour Party and reduce its chances to be in power. What made matters worse for successive prime ministers was the fact that the NRP (due to internal developments) changed its political agenda and threatened to withdraw from the government should it agree to concede any part from the West Bank. Israeli decision-makers, constrained by domestic considerations, preferred the territorial status quo in the West Bank.

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[60] Ibid., p.130.

In fact, those domestic forces on the right of the political spectrum that opposed any territorial compromise in the West Bank defeated Labour in the 1977 General Election. This event in turn had left a profound impact on Israel's foreign policy towards both the West Bank and Jordan. We turn now to explore how domestic political changes in Israel impacted on its foreign policy towards Jordan in particular and the broader issue of the peace process.

Likud's Ascendance to Power, 1977-84

The general election in Israel on May 17, 1977 brought about a dramatic change within Israeli politics. For the first time in the brief history of the State of Israel, the Likud won a national election, thereby ending the 29 years of uninterrupted Labour rule (reasons for Labour's electoral defeat will be discussed in chapter four). This change is referred to in Israel as the 'turnabout' (*mahapach*). Menachem Begin, the leader of the Likud, became the Prime Minister of Israel and formed a right-of centre government. For those familiar with the new premier's 'Revisionist' ideology, it was obvious that the prospects of peace were slim. Some even expected war.[61]

Begin was renowned for his revisionist Zionist ideology. Historically, Zionism has two main strands: the Labour movement, which adopted a decision to accept the UN partition plan of 1947 and the Revisionist movement, which rejected the plan. Vlademir (Zeev) Jabotinsky (the founder of the Revisionist Movement within Zionism in 1925) called for the immediate establishment of Israel. Unlike the Labour movement which, still sought

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[61] Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, *Israel and the Peace Process, 1977-1982, In Search of Legitimacy for Peace* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p.19.

to establish Israel, believed in gradualism and compromise, the Revisionist movement believed that confrontation with Arabs was inevitable and thus ruled out compromise with them. It even considered Jordan to be an integral part of *Eretz Yisrael.* Begin, a great believer in Jabotinsky's teachings, had a deep commitment to the idea of Jewish historical right in *Eretz Yisrael.* For him, the West Bank was '*Judea and Samaria*', the heart of the biblical Land of Israel. It was therefore not unnatural for him to reject both the UN Partition Plan of 1947 and the armistice agreement with Jordan concluded after the 1948 War. He believed that Israel should have taken the West Bank of Jordan during the course of the 1948 War. Commenting on the declaration of independence announced by Ben-Gurion in 1948, Begin said furiously that 'we shall remember that the homeland has not yet been liberated.'[62] Begin was a member in the Knesset in 1949 when Israel concluded an armistice agreement with Jordan. He called for a no-confidence vote in order to topple Ben-Gurion over the armistice agreement with Jordan.[63]

To better understand Likud's position on peace, it is crucial to outline how Likud's perception of the region, particularly Jordan, had evolved through the twentieth century. The Revisionist Movement (the intellectual source of Likud) refused to acknowledge the 1922 League of Nations decision that excluded Transjordan from the Balfour Declaration, published by the British government in 1917 promising the establishment of national home for Jews in Palestine. This was obvious in Herut's, the forerunner of Likud, choice of its emblem and anthem. The former pictured a hand holding a rifle imposed over a map showing both Jordan and Palestine, whereas the anthem stated in

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[62] Ilan Peleg, *Begin's Foreign Policy, 1977-1983: Israel's Move to the Right* (New York: Greenwood, 1987), p.27.

[63] Ibid., p.31.

part 'two banks has the Jordan; this one's ours, the other too.'[64] However, in the aftermath of the Six-Day War, Herut was satisfied with the war's territorial gains in the West Bank. It advocated policies that would consolidate Israel's grip in the territories. Its participation in the NUG (1967-70) was meant only to influence foreign policy and to forestall any settlement with Jordan. Some circles in the Likud Party advocated the idea that 'Jordan is Palestine'. Among those who later became prominent figures in Israeli politics that advocated this idea were Ariel Sharon, Yitzhak Shamir, and the young Benjamin Netanyahu (who in 1996 became Prime Minister). In 1970, during the Black September in Jordan, Sharon, then a general in the army, argued for the overthrow of the Hashemite regime and the setting up of a Palestinian state in Jordan. This, he believed would change the conflict from one on the legitimate existence of Israel to one on borders.[65]

Yehuda Lukacs argues that one of Sharon's unstated aims during his war against Lebanon in 1982 was to cause a mass exodus of Palestinians refugees into Jordan in order to put an end to the Hashemite regime.[66] Sharon's insistence that 'Jordan is Palestine' was meant to justify Israel's annexation of the West Bank. Shamir made a similar point when he argued that 'Jordan is Palestine'. He wrote that:

> The state known today as the Kingdom of Jordan is an integral part of what once was known as Palestine (77 percent of the territory); its inhabitant therefore are Palestinian-not different in their language, culture, or religious and demographic composition from other

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[64] Robert J. Bookmiller, 'Likud's Jordan Policy,' *Middle East Policy*, vol. V, no. 3 (September 1997), p.91.

[65] Ariel Sharon, *Warrior, the Autobiography of A. Sharon* (New York: 1989),.p.247.

[66] Yehuda Lukacs, op. cit., p.158.

> Palestinians...It is merely an accident of history that this state is called the Kingdom of Jordan and not the Kingdom of Palestine.[67]

Certainly, the Revisionist ideology affected Likud's conception of security and peace, and of course this put Likud in a position that was of stark difference from Labour. Both Likud and Labour gave security and the survival of the state priority over peace. Yet, they have different conceptions of security matters and herein lie the fundamental difference between their foreign policy outlooks. Whereas Likud was committed to an ideology that placed territory over any other value such as peace, Labour was a pragmatic party that placed security over other values such as territory.[68] Hence, for Labour, security, which does not necessarily mean territory, is regarded as sacred whereas for Likud land is sacred.[69]

Though the national security was the dominant theme in the public debate on the future of the occupied territories, a second major element in the debate concerned settling anywhere in the West Bank. The debate over what the state's boundaries should be and what sort of society Israel should become was basic within Zionism. Shlomo Avineri argues that there are two schools of thought with regard to this point. The first school of thought is 'sociological or societal'; it is identified with the Labour movement.[70] Advocates of this school argue that the most important thing is not the border of the state, but the internal structure of the Israeli society. To them, a Greater Israel (which

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[67] Yitzhak Shamir, 'Israel's Role in a Changing Middle East,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol.60, no.4 (Spring 1982), p.791.

[68] Avi Shlaim, "Israeli Politics and Middle East Peacemaking," *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol. XXIV, no. 4 (Summer 1995), p.21.

[69] Ibid., p.21.

[70] Shlomo Avineri, 'Ideology and Israel's Foreign Policy,' *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, vol.37 (1986), p.6.

includes the whole West Bank and Gaza) will contain more Palestinians and thus will be less Zionist and definitely less Jewish.[71] It would end up in a bi-national state, which was definitely not the Zionist dream. Israel, accordingly, would either cease to be democratic or become less Jewish.

The second school of thought is the 'territorial school', and is identified with the Likud and its allies to its right.[72] This school is different from the territorialist one advocated by Yigal Allon within Labour, which was discussed previously in this chapter. This school, which is rooted in the Revisionist Movement, focuses on the 'historical right' of Jews to *Eretz Yisrael* that includes the West Bank. Likud's commitment to this ideology made it very difficult to imagine relinquishing land from the West Bank to anyone, be they Jordan or the Palestinians. Following the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, Begin had no ideological problem in dismantling *Yamit*, a Jewish settlement in Sinai, because he had no ideological affinity with Sinai. However, because he deemed the settlements in the West Bank to be an expression of a basic Jewish claim to heart of the Land of Israel, he could not do the same thing with settlements in the West Bank.[73]

Likud, which represented the territorial school, was now in power. It was driven by an ideology that led to an aggressive settlement policy towards the West Bank. This policy meant *inter alia* to establish political facts (settlements) that would prevent future

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[71] Ibid., p.6.

[72] Ibid., p.5.

[73] Ibid. p.5.

Labour-led governments from exchanging land for peace with Jordan.[74] On the whole, Israelis believed that settlements are irreversible facts. This conviction is inherited from the pre-state period when the Yishuv's leaders thought that the extent of the state's borders would be shaped by the settlements. Unlike Labour governments, which built settlements in areas which were deemed important for the security of Israel and believed that these settlements would be annexed, the Likud governments built settlements in every possible part in the West Bank with the intention of perpetuating Israeli control. During Likud's first term in power in the period from 1977-1981, forty-four settlements were established: thus increasing the number of settlers in the West Bank from 5,000 to more than 16,000 settlers.[75] During its second term in power, from 1981-1984, Likud accelerated the pace of settlements. By 1984, the total number of settlements in the West Bank and Gaza was 114, the number of settlers was around 30,000 (this excluded East Jerusalem).[76]

Indeed, the year 1977 was a turning point of Israel's foreign policy. The triumph of the territorial school over the societal school in 1977, thanks to the internal shift in the Israeli society toward the right, made it impossible for any attempt to construct a successful peace. However Israel, under Likud, did conclude a peace treaty with Egypt in 1979. Peace with Egypt meant practically that Israel no longer faced the possibility of a two-front war, as had occurred during the October War. The security of Israel was thus enhanced to an unprecedented level. With his decision to evacuate Sinai for peace with

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[74] Valarei Yorke, *Domestic Politics and Regional Security: Jordan, Syria and Israel* (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company, 1988), p.189.

[75] Ibid., p.191.

[76] Ibid., p.191.

Egypt, Prime Minister Begin accepted UNSC Resolution 242. In fact, Begin had not accepted Resolution 242 before Likud's victory in the election in 1977. However, this acceptance to Resolution 242 came with a different interpretation. He argued that by evacuating Sinai, Israel fully implemented the resolution. He did not accept that Resolution 242 could apply on all fronts (the Syrian and Jordanian fronts).[77]

Towards the end of the first Likud government in 1981, Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and Defence Minister Ezer Weizmann resigned due to differences with Begin over the autonomy talks. Dayan and Weizmann, the most moderate ministers within the cabinet, believed that Begin was not serious about the autonomy plan. The Camp David agreements, which provided a framework for the solution for the Palestinian problem, gave the Palestinians autonomy. The autonomy plan for the West Bank and Gaza referred to a five-year transition period after which full autonomy would be given to the inhabitants of the territories. It left the issue of sovereignty over the West Bank open for future negotiations. Begin's intention of the autonomy plan was to prepare the international community for the final absorption of the West Bank into Israel.[78] He meant autonomy for population and not for land. To achieve this goal, Begin appointed Dr. Y. Burg, the hard-liner leader of the NRP, to head the autonomy talks. In doing so, however, Begin guaranteed the failure of the talks. Begin did not want the autonomy talks on the West Bank to succeed. After the resignations of Dayan and Weizmann, Begin appointed Ariel Sharon as Defence Minister and Yitzhak Shamir as Foreign

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[77] William B. Quandt, 'U.S. Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict,' in William B. Quandt (ed.), *The Middle East: Ten Years After Camp David* (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution, 1988), p.384.

[78] Illan Peleg, op. cit., p.101.

Minister. Begin's advisors, Shamir, Sharon, and Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan who were all known for their hawkish position dominated the foreign policy process.

In the absence of Weizmann and Dayan, the Cabinet contained no moderate members. The second Likud government, 1981-84 was the most hawkish in Israel's history. The government was made up of like-minded men who believed in Israel's exclusive right to determine the future of the West Bank. It pursued an aggressive foreign policy. In addition to building new settlements at an unprecedented rate, the government ordered the IDF to carry out an attack against Iraq's nuclear reactor in July 1981 and ordered the IDF to invade Lebanon in June 1982. Israel's invasion of Lebanon should be understood within the wider context of Begin's ideological and strategic positions towards the West Bank. At the centre of his foreign policy was the goal of annexing the West Bank. Begin and Sharon believed that by invading Lebanon and destroying the PLO's political and military infrastructures, the inhabitants of the territories would accept the terms of Begin's autonomy plan. The PLO at the end of the 1970s and beginning of 1980s was gaining international recognition. Begin feared that if the PLO's ascendance went on unchecked, Israel would be forced to negotiate with the PLO. Thus, destroying the PLO would, it was hoped, facilitate the annexation of the West Bank.

After the Lebanon War, Israel remained opposed to any peace attempt. Begin rejected the Reagan plan out of hand. The Plan, as was announced by President Reagan in September 1982 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, called for a solution to the Palestinian problem by relinquishing parts of the West Bank to Jordan. It also called on Israel to freeze settlements in the West Bank. Begin's answer was the announcement of

the building of eight new settlements in the West Bank. In 1983 Begin, because of poor health, resigned only to be succeeded by Yitzhak Shamir, one of the hawks within Likud. With a new leadership, the Likud did not change. It remained loyal to its longstanding ideology that placed the West Bank as its top priority.

To conclude, the election of Begin in 1977, was a watershed in Israel's history. For the first time, a Revisionist party assumed power. The most important repercussion of this change was Israel's adoption of an anti-Jordanian policy. The 'Jordanian Option' entertained by the Labour party was substituted by the autonomy plan. One fact remained unchanged though, Likud's ultimate goal; the annexation of the West Bank. The Likud-led government refused to contemplate any territorial concession in the West Bank, and the rejection of the Reagan plan should be seen within this context. The next major shift in Israel's foreign policy was the formation of the National Unity Government in 1984.

The National Unity Government, 1984-1988

The Israeli general election in 1984 ended inconclusively. The Labour-led block received 60 seats, as did the Likud-led block.[79] Neither Likud nor Labour, therefore, could form a government without the participation of the other. Accordingly, setting up a NUG was the only viable option for both Labour and Likud. Shimon Peres, the leader of the Labour Party, and Yitzhak Shamir, the leader of the Likud Party, agreed to participate in government. They agreed to rotate the premiership and to divide the

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[79] Dani Korn and Boaz Shapira, *Coalition Politics in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, Publisher, 1997), p.308 (in Hebrew).

cabinet equally between their blocks. There were two pressing problems that faced the NUG; these were the Israeli militarily presence in Lebanon and an inflation rate of over 400%.[80] The government, under the leadership of Peres, was able to solve the inflation problem and managed to re-deploy the IDF into a 'security zone' in southern Lebanon. However, the two parties had different foreign policy orientations, therefore, in its platform, the NUG only agreed to call vaguely on Jordan to start negotiations without preconditions.

When Shimon Peres, for the first time, assumed the premiership, the peace process was almost dead. Israel, under Likud (1977-84), had made no serious efforts to solve the Palestinian problem. On the contrary, they complicated the peace process by establishing more settlements, by refusing to proceed with the autonomy negotiations, and indeed by initiating the Lebanon War in June 1982. Unlike his predecessors, Begin and Shamir—who marred Israel's image by initiating the war in Lebanon and by displaying intransigence regarding peace with Jordan—Peres sought to rebuild Israel's reputation in the international arena.[81] He tried to revive the peace process and settle the Palestinian problem with Jordan.

Of course, Peres explored the prospects for a separate peace settlement with Jordan on the basis of the Jordanian option. On this issue, he was in complete agreement with Rabin, who became Defence Minister.[82] Their desire to make peace with Jordan was

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80 Ibid.,pp.310-12.

81 Avi Shlaim, 2000, op. cit., p.428.

82 Ibid., p.430.

paralleled by some positive development on the Arab side. King Hussein and the PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat signed the Amman agreement on February 11, 1985. According to this agreement a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation would participate in an international conference to negotiate a settlement to the conflict that would be based on 'land for peace' formula.[83] Prime Minister Peres praised this agreement, but was still hindered by his coalition with Likud from endorsing it. The United States, whose involvement was desired by both Peres and the King, refused to talk to the proposed joint Jordan-Palestinian delegation unless the PLO lived up to the American conditions.[84] These conditions were the PLO acceptance of Resolution 242, recognising Israel's right to exist, and renouncing terrorism. The United States position with regard to the PLO went back to 1975, when Kissinger committed his country not to talk to the PLO until it met these conditions. Arafat, due to intra-PLO differences, failed to meet these conditions and subsequently the Amman agreement became redundant. Another reason for the American lack of enthusiasm for the idea of international conference was the fear that such a conference would bring the Soviet Union (after being excluded successfully from peacemaking in the Middle East) back in the region.

However, the underlying problem in Israel's strategy for peace was the fact that the government spoke with two different voices. Peres genuinely sought to explore the prospects for a peace settlement with Jordan on the basis of the UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 383. He believed that the obstacle in holding direct negotiations with Jordan was a procedural one. The Jordanians insisted on an international

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[83] For more details, see Madiha Madfai, *Jordan, The United States and the Middle East Peace Process 1974-1991* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[84] Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), p.456.

conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council. It was, however, understood that Hussein wanted an international conference in order to legitimise his participation in the negotiations with the Israelis. It was, then, a matter for the Israeli government to overcome this particular problem. Though Peres displayed an appreciation of Jordan's constraints, he would not have been able to proceed with this idea without the breakdown of the NUG. Shamir, who represented the second voice in the government, adamantly opposed the international conference, thus handicapping Peres. As a consequence there was little progress.

Shamir was able to stop Peres from agreeing to the idea of international conference partly due to his fear, which stemmed from his perception of the whole world against Jews, that Arabs would be able to manipulate an anti-Israeli stand and thus perhaps impose a solution on Israel. Another reason for Shamir's rejection of the idea of an international conference was (as will be discussed in next chapter) what might be termed his intra-party position. Shamir's leadership of Likud was not taken for granted. Three prominent members; Ariel Sharon, David Levy, and Yitzhak Modai (the three of them opposed the idea of international conference) challenged Shamir's leadership of Likud.

Shimon Peres, influenced by his aide Dr. Yossi Beilin (one of the most articulate young doves of Labour), was the most enthusiastic within the NUG for the international conference because he deemed the conference just to be a token event after which parties to the conflict would break up into bilateral tracks. He managed to sign a document with

King Hussein in April 11, 1987, which is known as the 'London Document'.[85] This document constituted a procedural agreement on direct Israel-Jordan negotiations under the auspices of an international conference. The conference was to be held with the participation of all the parties to the conflict, including Palestinian representatives. In this document, it was agreed that the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council 'would not be able to impose any settlement on the parties or to veto any agreement reached between them in bilateral negotiations.'[86] Believing that the United States could play a constructive role in advancing the peace process, Peres sought to elicit American approval for the document. Yossi Beilin met the American Secretary of State, George Shultz, in Helsinki, informed him about the breakthrough, and asked him to adopt it as an American initiative.[87] Shultz telephoned the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, to find out whether he was ready to proceed with the London agreement suggesting that he visit the Middle East. Shamir's response came shortly and was made through his aide, Elyakim Rubinstein, who informed Shultz that Shamir was not interested in the idea and that he would not anyway welcome a visit by Shultz.[88] On April 24, 1987, Shamir sent Moshe Arens without the knowledge of his Foreign Minister, Peres, to tell Shultz that the idea of an international conference was not acceptable and that if Shultz presented the London agreement this would be tantamount

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[85] Ziva Flamhaft, *Israel on the Road to Peace: Accepting the Unacceptable* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1996), p.50.

[86] Yossi Beilin, *Israel: A Concise Political History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p.125.

[87] Avi Shlaim, 2000, op. cit., p.446.

[88] Ibid., p.446.

to interference in Israeli domestic politics.[89] Shamir's rejection of this framework proved that a two-headed government was a prescription for immobilism in foreign policy.

To sum up, ideological and political differences, clashes of interests, and conflicting perspectives among key ministers within the coalition government regarding peace were the main cause for the stalemate in the peace process. These factors were, indeed, aggravated by the outcomes of the 1984 general election. Likud obtained veto power over the making and conduct of foreign policy, and, therefore, it was not possible for Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, to explore the possibility of implementing his preferred solution—that of the Jordanian option.

Conclusions

This chapter has identified the historic relative significance of the dynamic of domestic politics in Israel and its impact upon the formulation of its foreign policy in respect to the peace process. The evolution of certain configurations of domestic power (which developed autonomously from external factors) contributed largely to the immobilism in the peace process whereby Israel failed to respond positively to the changes in its strategic environment brought about by the Six-Day War of 1967.

The June War had transformed the Arab-Israeli conflict from what might be considered a zero-sum game to mixed-motive one. This means that, in theory, the territorial conquest provided Israel with a mechanism by which it could exchange land for peace. More importantly, however, the war had led to the breakdown of the Israeli consensus on

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[89] Ibid., p.447.

national security issues. The stunning victory in the war accompanied by territorial gains had led to the crystallisation of dissonance inherent within Zionism on both the physical borders of the state and the very nature of the society. It has been demonstrated throughout this chapter that a lack of peace stemmed from Israel's failure to formulate a clear position or take decisions concerning peace with either Jordan or the Arab world.

At the heart of the problem with Jordan was the continuation of the occupation. Israel's policy towards the Occupied Territories was the function of the interaction of four factional positions: the reconciliationist, the territorialist, the functionalist, and the annexationist. The emergence of the four positions could be attributed to differences within Israel over how peace should be attained, the borders of Israel, the future of the West Bank, and clash of personalities. The outcome of the different positions, which were adopted by key decision-makers, was the status quo.

It is against this background that the Palestinian Intifada erupted in December 1987. The Intifada demonstrated that the status quo in the West Bank and Gaza was no longer an option. The next chapter focuses on the impact of the Intifada on various players but with an emphasis on Labour.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTIFADA: A TURNING POINT

As we saw in the previous chapter, Israel's policies towards both Jordan and the Occupied Territories during the period after the-Six-Day War resulted primarily from the interaction of four bureaucratic positions which directly influenced the behaviour and actions of successive Israeli cabinets. Ultimately, the outcome of these interactions was—perhaps not surprisingly—that of the status quo. This was, as Israelis claimed, inevitable due to the absence of any single Arab partner with which to negotiate. A clear majority of the Israeli public actually preferred to see Jordan as, what one might term, a 'partner for peace'.[1] This preference may be explained by the fact that for many Israelis the Palestinian problem had always been perceived within the context of the border conflict with the neighbouring Arab states.

The overwhelming majority of Israelis had not historically attached much importance to a group which may be described as 'local' Palestinians and they had indeed underestimated the ability of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza to take the initiative in terms of a peace settlement.[2] In fact, the general perception in Israel was that Palestinians were either pro-PLO or pro-Jordan and as a result, reliant on one of the two; they were, therefore, seen to have no political clout of their own. This is important to understand since the eruption and persistence of the Palestinian Intifada in December 1987 came as a surprise and shock not just to Israeli politicians but also to the Israeli population. Indeed, every other actor in the region engaged in the conflict was equally

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[1] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[2] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

surprised, including—somewhat ironically given Israeli perceptions—Jordan and the PLO.

As this chapter demonstrates, the Intifada was a protest against the continued Israeli occupation of both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This meant that the status quo upon which the Israelis had pinned their hopes was no longer viable. Demands too were being made, by the international community and indeed by an increasing number of Israelis, that a political solution be found to the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and a resolution to the Palestinian dimension in particular.

Furthermore, this chapter argues that it was of critical importance that the Intifada occurred at a time when Israel was governed by a National Unity Government (NUG). Because of this, no decision could be taken without both Labour and Likud ministers agreeing on any particular action. As we will see, the advent of the Intifada was the crucial variable that led many politicians to change positions with respect to finally advocating a political rather than a military solution to the Palestinian problem. This became increasingly obvious within Labour where so-called 'doves' pressed the leadership of the party hard to adopt a more conciliatory position *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians. The events of the Intifada were used to strengthen their argument. Hence, the Labour party pressed Likud for a solution and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who was also under pressure from outside (in particular the United States), reluctantly responded by declaring what became known as the Shamir Plan (to be discussed in further details).

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section examines how the Israeli government reacted to both the outbreak and persistence of the Intifada. It also accounts for its outbreak. A second explores the impact of the Intifada on Israeli politics in general, a third section analyses the specific impact it had on the NUG, while a fourth looks at the consequences of the Intifada on the Knesset election of 1988. The final section examines the formation of the second NUG and the implication of this on peace initiatives.

Israeli Reactions to the Intifada

December 8, 1987 marked the very first day of the Intifada. The incident that actually sparked off the conflict was a road accident in Gaza, which resulted in the death of four Palestinians and injuries to many more. What we may describe as ordinary Palestinians believed that the accident had been the result of a deliberate action taken by an IDF tank-transport; demonstrations by Palestinians followed.[3] These demonstrations and riots spread rapidly throughout Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the Intifada was born. Israelis were, in general, surprised by its outbreak. Prior to its eruption, many Israelis (in particular those on the right) had claimed that the Palestinians' standard of living was good even under the occupation, that the Palestinians were by and large content, and that the territorial and political status quo was without real cost to Israel.[4] However, the Intifada proved them wrong.

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[3] Interview with Ghassan Khateeb, Geneva, May 28, 2000.

[4] Mark Tessler, 'The Intifada and Political Discourse in Israel,' *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol. XIX, no.2 (Winter 1990), p.47.

There was a set of factors that had contributed to the creation of the conditions leading up to the Intifada. These were primarily Israeli counterinsurgency policies, and secondly, the events on the regional and international scenes that had deepened the Palestinians' sense of isolation and frustration. Israeli actions since 1967 had only helped increase these feelings.[5] In her assessment of the Israeli counterinsurgency tactics on the Palestinians in the period between 1967 and 1987, Ruth Margolies argues that Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories, which aimed at pacifying the population, had been successful but only in the short term. She contends that Israeli leaders failed to recognise the deeper impact of their measures and thus, created the conditions for the Intifada to explode.[6] Specifically, immediately after the Six-Day War, Moshe Dayan, in his capacity as a Defence Minister (1967-74), had formulated the policy towards the West Bank and Gaza. He adopted a 'carrot and stick' policy coupled with an economic policy that aimed at increasing the welfare of the population in order to make the occupation appear to be more benign. The Palestinians' economic conditions did indeed improve as a result of Dayan's economic integration policy. This had resulted in somewhat placating the subjugated population, but did not go far enough. Not surprisingly, the Palestinians still sought the end of occupation. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip never resigned themselves to Israeli rule. The lack of resistance on the Palestinian part was not an indication of an acceptance of the Israeli occupation.

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[5] Ruth Margolies Beitler, 'The Intifada: Palestinian Adaptation to Israeli Counterinsurgency Tactics,' *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol.7, no,2 (Summer, 1995), p. 51.

[6] Ibid., p.51.

Palestinians were subjected under the occupation to daily humiliations such as restricted travel and police interrogation as well as searches by the Israeli army, only adding further insult to injury. Frustration became more acute by the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s when Likud assumed power in Israel and completely changed the policy towards the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This period witnessed an acceleration of settlement building and land expropriation. Palestinians were losing their land to settlers, leading to an increased level of confrontation between the IDF and the local Palestinians in the mid 1980s.[7] Likud-led governments, driven by the ideology of Greater Israel, followed a more aggressive and militant policy than its predecessors. Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Defence Minister Ariel Sharon initiated the Lebanon War (1982-85), which aimed at the destruction of the Palestinian national movement and attempted to break the will to resist the occupation. Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon hoped that by destroying the PLO in Lebanon, the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories would lose hope and agree to the autonomy plan proposed by the Likud government.

The Palestinians had been waiting for many years for a solution that would liberate them from the yoke of occupation. They had pinned their hopes on the Arab countries forcing Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. With the passage of time they started to believe, however, that nobody would come to their assistance. By 1987, this sense of abandonment had been greatly intensified. Regional players engaged in the conflict gave them little attention. At the Amman Summit Conference in 1987, the Palestinian problem, which was traditionally the main issue at all Arab summits, was relegated

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[7] Ze'ev Schif and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd, 1990), Chapter Two, (in Hebrew).

because there was greater concern about the Iraq-Iran War.[8] A summit meeting between the American President, Ronald Reagan and his Soviet counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev also failed to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At this juncture, the superpowers, in the process of rapprochement, were indifferent to the Palestinian problem.

This, coupled with the failure of the guerrilla tactics adopted by different factions of the PLO to end the occupation, led the local Palestinian populace unconsciously to think of a different track to follow in order to further their national interests.[9] The general populace started to take the initiative on an unprecedented scale. There were many grass root organisations and some women's movements which provided services to the public but also tried to organise the public to call for independence, defiance and resistance against occupation.[10] These changes within Palestinian politics—especially after the Lebanon War following the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon—created and developed an atmosphere conducive to the Intifada.

Once the Intifada erupted, the Israeli government had to respond to this new and unexpected situation. Yet this was a government resting upon an uneasy coalition; the Prime Minster, Yitzhak Shamir, was from the hawkish Likud Party whereas the Defence Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was from the 'dovish' Labour Party. The immediate concern of the Israeli government was to end the Intifada and restore calm. Yet it appeared so

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[8] Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p.682.

[9] Interview with Ghassan Khateeb, Geneva, May 28, 2000.

[10] Interview with Ghassan Khateeb, Geneva, May 28, 2000.

robust that it alarmed the government and the public alike.[11] The Chief of Staff, Dan Shomron, argued that the Intifada was a genuine popular resistance movement, not a simple case of rioting. In January 1989, Shomron, in a series of interviews, compared it to the Algerian revolution[12] (1954-62), in which the native Algerians had rebelled against French colonisation.[13] As a consequence of these assessments, the Israeli government resorted to the use of the IDF to quell the Intifada rather than relying solely on the less powerful but less provocative police forces.

Despite the fact that the Intifada was not an inter-state war, confronting it, from the Israeli perspective, entailed the mobilisation of thousands of troops. Shomron admitted that in Gaza alone the number of troops deployed to deal with the Intifada were more than Israel had used during the occupation of the entire territories in 1967.[14] In addition, there were corresponding problems. Israeli soldiers were needed on duty for prolonged periods, which was difficult given Israel's small population. In terms of strategic planning, Israel had always favoured a short war. There were several reasons for this. As well as the aforementioned demographic consideration, Israel could not economically afford to keep the army mobilised indefinitely. Hence, prolonged wars, such as the Lebanon War or the War of Attrition (1968-1970) had proved problematic for Israeli

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[11] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[12] The Algerian revolution of 1954-62 against French colonisation, ended in the victory of the Algerians over the French and the independence of Algeria. However, the Algerians in their determined struggle against the French, lost several hundred thousands victim.

[13] Mark Tessler, 1994, op. cit., p. 700.

[14] Don Peretz, *Intifada, The Palestinian Uprising* (USA: Westview Press, Inc, 1990), p.45.

public opinion.[15] For example, during the Lebanon War, the 'peace camp'—which referred to those Israelis who were against the war and consistently pressed the government to come to peace with the Palestinians—held many demonstrations with hundreds of thousands of participants.

Despite the size of the operation, it was not an easy task for the IDF to crush the Intifada. It had to confront unarmed civilians (the Palestinians) who were determined to achieve independence. This was unlike a conventional war between two states, and perhaps more critically, it was a type of mission for which the IDF was not designed. The main function of the IDF had traditionally been to ensure the survival of the state by protecting it from external threats, and occasionally to achieve Israel's foreign policy goals; the Lebanon War is a case in point. Minister of Defence, Yitzhak Rabin, later admitted 'you cannot saddle the IDF with a mission that is outside its proper function.'[16] Rabin understood this limitation perfectly and his criticism of right wing politicians who believed in the utility of using force to solve the problem was widely known among both Israeli scholars and politicians. The continuous demands for crushing the Intifada by using live ammunition therefore fell on deaf ears. In fact, Rabin's inclination towards containing the Intifada rather than crushing it was primarily derived from his belief that relying only on military force alone would not be sufficient to provide a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, as a result of the persistence of the Intifada coupled with the Israeli military failure to end it, Rabin became more convinced than ever of the necessity of a 'political' approach. In a lecture in Jerusalem in September 1988, he

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[15] As a result of the war in Lebanon, the inflation in the Israeli economy reached an unprecedented level. It was around 400 percent. Furthermore, Israeli public was sharply divided over the war and there was no consensus on issues relating to national security.

[16] *The Jerusalem Post*, February 29, 1988.

stressed that as a result of recent experiences, the IDF could not alone put down the Intifada.[17] For Rabin, it was far easier to deal with a classical security problem or to fight another army. It was problematic to tackle 1.3 million people in the Occupied Territories; people adamantly opposed to Israeli rule.[18] He knew that his country was not capable of mustering enough military power to impose a peace treaty on its enemies. Hence, Rabin designed a policy to 'contain' rather than to 'crush' the Intifada, although along with most Israelis, he believed that Israel's military superiority was a necessary condition to end the conflict with the Arabs on terms favourable to Israel.[19]

Whatever Rabin's views in the short to medium term, it was a critical priority for the Israeli government to restore calm. In an attempt to realise this objective the IDF moved through several phases, adopting a 'trial and error approach' which included different methods. However, these measures proved ineffective as the Intifada persisted for five years. In Rabin's 'iron fist' policy, his first, the army used measures such as firing live ammunition at Palestinians taking part in the daily activities of the Intifada. This policy, however, was criticised universally and widely condemned even by the Israeli radical left.[20] Many felt that this policy was too harsh.

When the 'iron fist' policy failed to end the Intifada, Rabin ordered a second strategy; the policy of 'beating'. This required the IDF to confront the Palestinian masses and

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[17] *Davar*, September 15, 1988.

[18] Lea Rabin, *Rabin, Our Life, His Legacy (Israel*: Miskal-Yedioth Ahronoth Books and Chemed Books, 1997), p 207, (in Hebrew).

[19] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[20] Mark Tessler 1994, op. cit., p.696.

beat them with clubs to disperse them. Rabin explained this policy to the Knesset and argued that it was based on three principles:

> First, in the short term, resorting calm while taking all the necessary steps within the framework of the law to prevent displays of violence by the population residing in the these areas. Second, the only way to obtain a permanent solution on the legal and political future of Judea, Samaria and Gaza and to determine the future of the inhabitants living there is and should be through political negotiations for peace along our eastern borders...the third principle is to clarify unequivocally to the residents of the territories, to the Arab countries, and to the international community that the path of war, threats of war, terrorism, and violent disturbances will achieve nothing.[21]

The 'beating' policy was intended to minimise the number of Palestinians killed. The aim was to abate criticism by the international community of Rabin's 'iron fist' policy. The philosophy behind this strategy was that beating would also physically incapacitate Palestinian demonstrators but would not kill. Furthermore, it was hoped that it would be more effective than arresting participants in the demonstrations, because once released, those arrested could simply return to throwing stones.

When the 'beating' policy failed to end the tactic of mass demonstrations, Rabin devised a 'politico-military' strategy. This new strategy, initiated in March 1988, was designed as one of attrition directed against the Palestinians through military and administrative measures. It was emphasised that Palestinian activities would be met with robust Israeli countermeasures.

Rabin believed that this approach should also be supplemented by political initiatives. Indeed, perhaps rather ironically, Rabin came to the conclusion that the Intifada had, for the first time, created conditions conducive to the emergence of local Palestinian leaders

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[21] *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, WB ME/0043, A/1, January 8, 1988.

in the West Bank and Gaza.[22] He believed that, if encouraged and provided with incentives, local Palestinians could stand up to the PLO and defy its dictates. As a consequence, he started meeting Palestinian residents from the West Bank as early as June 1988 in order to explore the possibility of talking with the local leaders while bypassing the PLO.[23] His attempt to cultivate a local leadership stemmed from his firm refusal to talk with the PLO and his disillusionment with a purely Jordanian option.

Along with the use of physical force, the Israeli government applied economic pressure (part of the containment strategy) to compel the Palestinians themselves to undermine the Intifada. Accordingly, many were denied work permits, and some even found it very difficult to travel from one Palestinian city to another. The Israelis hoped that the Palestinians would soon realise that the Israelis would render ineffective the disruptive activities of the Intifada. Chief of Staff Dan Shomron explained this policy, adopted in January 1988, by stating that Palestinians would not go to work, would not receive work permits, travel permits or business licenses 'until they understood that peace and tranquillity were as good for them as for us.'[24]

Other measures were pursued as part of this strategy. These measures included deporting activists, imposing curfews, closing schools and universities, demolishing

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[22] Yitzhak Rabin, Interview on the Israeli TV on January 13, 1988.

[23] The PLO has been a central actor in the conflict. It is clear that without the participation of the PLO in the peace process, little would have resulted. The importance of the PLO stems from its ability to gain ascendance in inter-Arab politics at the expense of Jordan. In 1974, the Arab Summit in Morocco acknowledged the PLO as the sole legitimate representative for the Palestinians thus undermining Jordan's claim to speak for them. Since then, King Hussein of Jordan was refrained from going ahead alone. The Intifada only exacerbated these trends, and in fact dealt a death blow tot Jordan's bid to represent the Palestinians.

[24] *Yediot Aharonot*, January 15, 1988.

Palestinian houses, sealing off the territories and 'transplanting' Palestinian collaborators, using rubber and plastic bullets designed to injure participants in riots, and administratively detaining leaders, such as Faisal Husseini and Professor Sari Nusseibeh (both from Jerusalem and considered prominent local Palestinian leaders). Perhaps the most dramatic incidence was when an Israeli special unit flew to Tunisia in April 1988 and assassinated Abu-Jihad, second in command to the PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, widely believed to be the main organiser and architect of the daily activities of the Intifada. Israelis, especially those in the army and Mossad came to the conclusion that killing Abu Jihad would be a severe blow to the morale of the Uprising's participants, bringing it to a more rapid close.[25] Shimon Peres and Ezer Weizmann had opposed such an act on the grounds that it would jeopardise the prospects for peace, but had been overruled in the Inner Cabinet.[26] Again, the decision reflected the differences within the NUG over the correct response. While all Likud members believed that the Intifada could be put down militarily, Labour was divided on the issue, with the hawkish camp, led by Rabin, approving of the assassination of Abu Jihad.[27] Yet all of these measures failed to stop the Intifada. Using force against the Palestinians eventually proved counterproductive. Force had made the Palestinians even more resentful of Israeli rule. Only a political solution was possible.

Some of Rabin's policies of containment were subject to both international and domestic criticism. The international criticism came from not only the Arab countries but also from Europe, and perhaps most importantly from the United States. A UN Security

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[25] Ze'ev Schif and Ehud Ya'ari, op. cit., p. 160.

[26] Don Peretz, op. cit., p.61.

[27] Ibid., p.62.

Council resolution condemned Israel for deporting Palestinians, contravening the Fourth Geneva Convention, whilst another, in response to Israel's decision to deport 35 Palestinians on December 1988, was unanimously passed by the Security Council, condemning this action.[28] Traditionally, Israel had always relied on the United States to veto any decision against it in the Security Council. Israel's reliance on the United States economically, diplomatically, and military made it an important player which could help solve the conflict (as will be demonstrated later in this chapter and the final chapter). As a result of the ongoing conflict, the daily coverage by the international media of the Intifada, and the world's recognition of its legitimacy, Israel almost lost the American veto in the Security Council when several decisions were passed condemning Israeli's harsh measures against the unarmed civilians in the Occupied Territories.[29] Israel had been saved several times from a condemnation. The American veto had hitherto saved it from this ignominy. However, the persistence of the Intifada and Israel's harsh measures against the Palestinians forced the United States to reconsider its unqualified diplomatic support for Israel in the United Nations. The United States also tried to mediate a peace agreement through what became known as the 'Shultz Plan' of March 1988, and through Secretary of State James Baker's 'five points' in order to end the Intifada and start negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Criticism also came on a regular basis from the NGO, Amnesty International. It charged the IDF with use of lethal force and the beating of Palestinians on an indiscriminate basis. One such example was the statement made in February 1988 to the forty-fourth

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[28] Mark Tessler, 1994, op. cit., p.698.

[29] Ibid., p.699.

session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, which claimed that 'human rights violations on an extensive scale have become a feature of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza in recent months.'[30]

Domestic criticism was also levelled against the Israeli government and in particular against the Defence Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Both the 'Left' and the 'Right' were not happy with the measures taken by the IDF. Avraham Burg, a Labour 'dove', criticised Rabin's measures publicly as 'too harsh'. He said that:

> I remember me (sic) in 1988 calling Yitzhak Rabin the 'minister of war'. In Israel we use a minister of defence, a slightly more humane expression. And I said to him: you are the first minister of war in the history of Israel because of the Intifada and because we have to break bones etc.[31]

Yossi Sarid, a leftist Knesset member from Ratz[32] also expressed his opposition to Rabin's harsh repressive policies. He told the Committee of Foreign Affairs and Defence in the Knesset that the extreme use of force had become the norm rather than the exception and as such was unacceptable.[33] Many Israelis, leftists in particular, were also concerned about the democratic foundations of the state. Israel's pursual of security interests clashed with the democratic principles to which they believed Israel should have been adhering.[34] To them, Israel's security aims could be achieved by negotiating

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[30] Quoted in Don Peretz, 1990, op. cit., p.46.

[31] Interview with Avraham Burg, Jerusalem, February 16, 2000.

[32] Ratz is the Civil Rights Movement; a radical social-liberal party established in 1973 by Shulamit Aloni. It calls for electoral reform, the introduction of a Basic Law protecting human rights, the recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination, the separation between religion and state, and equal rights for women. It joined Mapam and Shinui in 1992 to form the Meretz party after the elecortal law increased the electoral threshold to 1.5 percent.

[33] *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/0167, I, June 2, 1988.

[34] Interview with Naomi Chazen, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

a peace treaty with the Palestinians. The protracted occupation and harsh measures applied against the Intifada had affected the 'social norms, political cohesion and ultimately the very foundation of democracy in Israel itself.'[35] Key values such as liberty, justice, and equality were losing ground in Israel to other values of Jewish nationalism and devotion to the idea of a Greater Israel. One can certainly argue that democracy and national security have been in constant struggle in Israel. Israeli leaders' obsession with security has led them to behave on many occasions contrary to democracy.

Yet despite these criticisms, right-wing politicians frequently expressed the idea that the continuation of the Intifada should be ascribed to Rabin's failure to deploy enough force. The Minister of Trade and Industry, Ariel Sharon (Likud) expressed his dissatisfaction with the policies employed by Yitzhak Rabin and called for his resignation. Sharon presented an alternative policy which, according to him, could crush the Intifada in a short period of time.[36] His strategy was composed of three pillars: a government commitment to 'win' rather than to 'contain' the Intifada, the use of non-routine and unpredictable methods so as to deprive the leaders of the Intifada of the ability to determine the fighting conditions, and undermining both the PLO's infrastructures and the Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza.[37] Sharon's proposed strategy was influenced by his own experience in the late 1960s and early 1970s when he was in charge of crushing

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[35] Gabriel Sheffer, 'Has Israel Really Been a Garrison Democracy? Sources of Change in Israel's Democracy,' *Israel Affairs*, vol.3, no. 1 (Autumn 1996), p.31.

[36] Nathan Yanai, 'The Intifada and the Likud Party,' Robert O. Freedman (ed.), *The Intifada, Its Impact on Israel, the Arab World, and the Superpowers* (USA: Florida International University Press, 1991), p.303.

[37] Ibid., p.303-4.

the Palestinian resistance in Gaza. He had employed extremely harsh and heavy-handed methods including the firing of live ammunition against civilians with the intent to kill. He was proud of the role he had had in this and promised to do the same to crush the Intifada should he receive the green light and the freedom of action from the government.[38] However, Sharon's ideas were not within the mainstream of Likud, as we shall see later in this chapter. Indeed, his position, according to Michael Eitan, was motivated by his ambition to be Likud leader, by presenting himself as strong, determined and decisive.[39]

Indeed, what was fascinating about this period is how the Israeli Government reacted to the Intifada and should be understood within the context of its impact on Israeli politics. Thus, the following section explores how the Intifada impacted upon domestic political discourse in Israel.

Divisions within the Elite in Response to the Intifada

The Intifada had erupted some eleven months before the Israeli Knesset election of November 1988. The intensity and the scope of the Intifada triggered an unprecedented debate among Israelis on how to respond to the aggravated situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In fact, the Israeli government was paralysed and was not able to take a decision or an initiative mainly because it was a NUG. Such a government could work only by consensus and with an understanding among a majority of its members. Since consensus—due to differences in opinions, clashes of personalities, and competition for

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[38] *Al-Rai al-Aam*, February 9, 1990.

[39] Interview with Michael Eitan, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

power between Shamir and Peres in particular, as well as within Labour in general—was difficult to achieve, a decision was unlikely. Actually the relationship between Shamir and Peres was, as Shamir described it, 'unfriendly.'[40] The Intifada and how to react to it had deepened the mistrust and difference that had already existed between these two leaders. On different occasions, during the election campaign, Peres argued that had Shamir not blocked his agreement with King Hussein, the Intifada would not have erupted in the first place. This was a conspicuous attempt on Peres' part to hold Likud and its intransigent leader responsible for the outbreak of the Intifada.

The Israeli public was divided over the Intifada. In the immediate and short-term, the Intifada had made the Israeli public even more hawkish than it usually was, thus giving Likud a slight edge over Labour in the 1988 election.[41] However, in the long run, it led a growing number of Israelis to adopt an increasingly more dovish position. Reuven Hazen, a political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem argues that this change towards a dovish attitude was not automatic. In his words: ' It takes time for this [change] just like the 1973 War, it took 1977 to see the reaction [i.e. voting against Labour] and here we had to wait up to 1992 to get the reaction.'[42] A possible explanation for such change was that the population was slowly coming to the conclusion that the Intifada could not be beaten.

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[40] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

[41] It is widely believed in Israel that when the personal security in Israel is threatened (as it was the case during the Intifada), Israeli public become more hawkish and as a consequence Likud would benefit from this situation. Even Shimon Peres admitted this when he (in an attempt to justify his electoral defeat in 1988, he claimed that the terrorist attack against some Israelis in Jericho two days before the election caused the Labour to lose at least two seats. According to Peres, had the incident not happened, Labour would have won.

[42] Interview with Dr. Reuven Hazen, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

The Intifada led to a distinct decrease in the number of Israelis who preferred the status quo (a right-wing hawkish preference). As Reuven Hazen argues,

> After 20 years of occupation, the Israeli society realised that this land had previous inhabitants, that these inhabitants are strategic liability, and that to deal with them was not an option to military force. As a consequence, the status quo died with the Intifada.[43]

An opinion poll conducted in 1986 prior to the outbreak of the Intifada showed that 47.1% favoured the status quo, 30.2% favoured giving up territories for peace, and 22.8% favoured annexing the territories.[44] This is in drastic contrast to another opinion poll conducted in May 1990, where the hawkish position received a meagre approval of only by 2.4%.[45] Israelis had discovered the link between the deterioration in their personal security and the maintenance of the status quo. Despite this, one should be careful not to interpret it as meaning that an overwhelming majority of Israelis would automatically accept territorial compromise to end the Intifada.

As for the political elites, they were also divided over the issue. According to Nathan Yanai, the divisions among Israeli parties were over three issues: the legitimacy of the Intifada, the strategy in dealing with it, and the peace process.[46] He distinguishes several partisan positions.

The first position was adopted by the radical anti-Zionist and the Zionist political left. This front had five Knesset seats in the 1988, from the Communist party, the Arab

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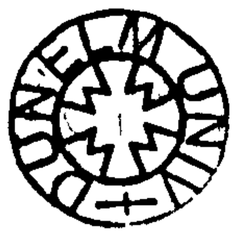
[43] Interview with Dr. Reuven Hazen, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

[44] Quoted in Goldberg Giora et al, *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute, 1991), p.12.

[45] Ibid., p.13.

[46] Nathan Yanai, op. cit., p.298.



Democratic List, and the Progressive List for Peace. Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab member of the Knesset, held that 'the Intifada was a legitimate means through which the Palestinians could press the Israeli government to negotiate with the PLO and assert Palestinians' right to self-determination.'[47] Needless to say, they criticised Rabin's harsh policies in suppressing the Intifada. Abdel Wahab Darawshe, an Arab Knesset member even resigned from the Labour Party in protest against the 'beating' policy. He eventually established the Arab Democratic Party.[48] This meant that many Israeli Arabs, who had traditionally voted for Zionist parties, would no longer support Labour as long as the latter supported suppressing the Palestinian national struggle for independence. The change in the politics of the Israeli Arabs would later make its impact when Rabin would need their support in the Knesset to proceed with the Oslo Accord (a framework for peace which was arrived at between the PLO and the Israeli government in September 1993).

The second position was one adopted by the radical Zionist left. It was comprised of Shinui, Mapam and Ratz with a total of 10 seats in the 1988 election. They argued that the Intifada was a legitimate means of achieving self-determination. Although they felt that a limited use of force against the Intifada was actually legitimate, they advocated negotiations with Palestinians or with the PLO towards an independent Palestinian state.[49] The intensity and persistence of the Intifada gave some credibility to their view of traditional government policy on the matter. For example, Deputy Speaker of the

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[47] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[48] Myron J. Aronoff, *Power and Ritual in the Israeli Labour Party, a Study in Political Anthropology* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc, 1993), p.207.

[49] Nathan Yanai, op. cit., p.299.

fifteenth Knesset, Naomi Chazen, argued that 'the Intifada did strengthen our [Meretz] argument that the status quo was impossible and that we should put an end to the occupation.'[50] This position was also close to the one adopted by the Labour party's 'doves' including Minister Ezer Weizmann, Yossi Beilin, Uzi Baram, Nawaf Massalha, and Haim Ramon.

A third position was that adopted by the radical right. This front was comprised of Tehiya (Revival), Moledet (Motherland), and Tzomet (Juncture). The three parties had seven seats in the Knesset. Moledet had campaigned on one issue; the idea of 'transfer', which simply stated that the solution to the Intifada was to expel Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. Some of Likud's leaders as well, such as Sharon, David Levy and Yitzhak Modai were very close to this group on matters relating to the Intifada. All believed that the Intifada was illegitimate and an attempt on the Palestinian side to put an end to the State of Israel; thus they advocated tougher measures against the Intifada.[51]

The position of the religious parties, which had increased their representation to 18 seats in the Knesset in the 1988 election, was not monolithic. The NRP (5 seats) was close to Likud, but a minority within the NRP was closer to the radical right. Shas (6 seats), while closer to Labour concerning negotiations, advocated tougher military measures to put an end to the Intifada. Agudat Yisrael (5 seats) and Degel Hatorah (2 seats) were closer to Labour on the above-mentioned three issues of legitimacy, strategy and the peace process.[52]

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[50] Interview with Naomi Chazen, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[51] Nathan Yanai, op. cit., p.303.

[52] Ibid., p.305.

The Labour mainstream position was different from Likud's in the sense that it was less ideological and thus, was far more flexible. It recognised the Palestinian aspiration to self-determination but simultaneously contended that Israel must be involved in determining its scope. The Intifada was thought illegitimate and a threat to Israel's current security, and as a consequence a strategy of containment was advocated.[53] Labour leaders, whether doves or hawks, acknowledged that the Intifada and the Palestinian problem could not be solved by military means. The growing violence simply increased a sense of urgency to find a political solution. Shimon Peres stated early during the period of the Intifada that:

> We should strive for a political effort regardless of any end to the ferment in the territories...If we wait until the riots die down and only then resume our political efforts, the riots will not stop. The situation in the field must be calmed by political peace activities as well.[54]

The persistence of the Intifada even changed the view of many within Labour who were sceptical about the utility of peace. Ra'nan Cohen argued that 'the Intifada changed many people, like me, who thought that peace with the Palestinians was not helpful to Israel. It changed my mind.'[55] The Intifada strengthened the dovish view within the party that Israel should negotiate with the Palestinians and did not exclude the possibility of adopting a 'Palestinian option' and a 'PLO option' instead of the 'Jordanian option'. Nawaf Massalha, one Labour dove, regarded it as the main driving force compelling Israel to start negotiations with the Palestinians; Israel would not have any choice but to broach talks with the PLO.[56]

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[53] Ibid., p.299.

[54] *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/0049 A/2, January 15, 1988.

[55] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[56] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000.

Furthermore, many within Labour, the doves in particular, were more concerned that the prolonged occupation would have a corrupting impact on Israeli society. The frequent use of force might, they believed, become a matter of routine. This normative concern had begun to be expressed after the War in Lebanon and increased during the Intifada. Ora Namir argued that the recurrent use of force would lead to intolerance and would create an Israeli generation that 'believes in the power of naked force as an alternative to dialogue, and as the only way to resolve disagreements.'[57] Hawks and *Yonetzim* (those caught between 'hawks' and 'doves') expressed their concerns over the impact of the use of force as well. Mordechai Gur (former Chief of Staff and Labour member) expressed his fears that the continued occupation might lay the ground for racism and Kahanism (a term, which refers to the racist, anti-Arab ideology that Rabbi Meir Kahane preached during the 1980s until his assassination in November 1990. Kahane believed that the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homes was the only solution).

The mainstream within Likud also regarded the Intifada as illegitimate and viewed it in the context of a Palestinian fight for the destruction of the State of Israel. The Likud leader, Yitzhak Shamir said in an appearance before the United Jewish Appeal during a visit to the United States that the Intifada was

> A war against Israel, against the existence of the State of Israel. I am astonished of some people's short memory. Did we have peace when we did not have those territories.[58]

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[57] Quoted in Efraim Inbar, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics, Labour Party Position on National Security* (USA: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc, 1991), p.140.

[58] Donald Neff, 'Can Shamir Be Lured into a Feather Bed?' *Middle East International*, no.321 (March 19, 1988), p.3.

During the 1988 election campaign, Shamir frequently declared that the conflict was not about borders but was a question of existence.[59] Yet despite Shamir's disagreement with Labour on the assumption that only a political solution could put an end to the Intifada, he acquiesced to Rabin's policy of containment.[60] Shamir was more interested in keeping the unity of his coalition with Labour rather than splitting the government over the matter. Still Likud's position over negotiating a peace settlement remained rigid. Shamir and the Likud maintained throughout the entire duration of the Intifada one basic propaganda line calling on the Arab states and the Palestinians to start direct negotiations to implement the plan for autonomy. Yet in spite of his rhetoric, there was actually little substance to Likud's support of the plan. A close look at its leaders' statements in the 1980s and prior to the outbreak of the Intifada show that the plan had already disappeared from Likud's discourse. The Intifada's only impact on this was to force them to present a semblance policy. In reality, even Shamir was not serious about autonomy, it only served the purpose of propaganda.[61] He never endorsed a peace plan, having even opposed the Camp David Accords with Egypt, which had happened to include just such a plan for autonomy.[62]

Whilst it may be true that Likud had not actually been led to introduce changes in its political platform, there had been, however, a tremendous impact on the struggle within

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[59] *Ha'aretz*, July 4, 1988.

[60] Nathan Yanai, op. cit., p.301.

[61] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 30, 2000.

[62] According to the Camp David Accords, Israel withdrew from the whole of Sinai and handed it over to the Egyptian sovereignty. Israel as well committed itself to give the Palestinian autonomy. Israel did withdraw from Sinai, but blocked the autonomy talk with the Egyptians. It is worth mentioning that the then Defines Minister, Ezer Weizmann resigned from his post in protest against the Israeli government's lack of seriousness on the autonomy talks.

Likud for power and leadership as well as a clash between the mainstream stance and the more radical positions. This, to an extent, altered the structure of the factional politics within the party. It is worth stressing at this point that the Likud party is actually made up of two parties which merged into a single one; the Herut and the Liberal parties. The Liberal's leader, Yitzhak Modai, was a contender for Likud's leadership. Within Herut there were three camps formed around three key personalities: Shamir-Arens, David Levy, and Sharon. The three men had often contested for the leadership and Shamir had won every time. Both Levy and Sharon together controlled around 50 percent of the Likud's Central Committee. And yet Modai, Levy, and Sharon found themselves outside the new centre of power and gradually lost ground to people around Shamir and his close supporter, Moshe Arens. They did not even receive key ministry positions. So, it could be argued that their stands had to do more with the power struggle within the party. As a consequence, the three leaders agreed to ally themselves against Shamir in order to obtain veto power over Shamir's political initiative and if possible, assume the leadership of the party and enforce a new agenda.[63]

In fact, the Intifada gave the 'constraint ministers' (this refers to Sharon, Levy, and Modai as they sought to outflank Shamir from the right on issues that had to do with peace) the chance to pressure Shamir but also the opportunity to outmanoeuvre him. Their alliance was a tactical one and had little to do with ideology. It was motivated by personal considerations, at least on the part of David Levy. Levy, an oriental Jew,[64]

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[63] Nathan Yanai, op. cit., p.308.

[64] The Jewish community in Israel is made up of two major ethnic communities. The Ashkenazi who came from Europe and who indeed established the state. The second group is the Sephardi who come from African and Asian background. The state of Israel has been dominated by Ashkenazi culture and ruled its adherents. In fact no Prime Minister has ever come from a Sephardi background. The Ashkenazi community was perceived to be arrogant and they even advocated the de-socialisation of the Sephardi

played a crucial role in bringing victory to Likud in 1977 and was regarded as a moderate figure within the party. In fact, he was a leading moderate in Begin's cabinet and even criticised the cabinet for initiating the controversial Lebanon War in 1982. He also supported the Labour ministers against Shamir's stand by voting for withdrawal from Lebanon and again, he gave a decisive vote in the inner cabinet to transfer the Taba issue to international arbitration.[65] His moves to outflank Shamir from the right were an attempt on his part to contest the leadership and gain more power within Likud. His hawkish position has less to do with conviction and was more related to internal party intrigue.[66] The alliance among the constraint ministers was strong and credible enough to challenge Shamir with regard to his plan for putting an end to the Intifada and giving the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories free elections (see the 'Shamir Plan' later in this chapter). Shamir acquiesced to their demands despite his strong standing in the party.[67] The divisions among the ruling elite with respect to the Intifada in fact paralysed it. This next section looks at how the Intifada influenced the conduct of government.

The National Unity Government and the Intifada

As clarified above, the Intifada posed a significant problem for the Israeli government.

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community and then re-socialising them according to the Ashkenazi values and culture. The Sephardi community is not doing as well as the Ashkenazi and consequently they look on themselves as a second class citizens.

[65] The ten-member inner cabinet was evenly divided between Labour and Likud. Levy voted twice against the wish of Shamir with the Labour ministers. The first time over the issue of withdrawal from Lebanon and the second one on Taba issue. Taba was a small portion of Sinai that Israel, under Likud, refused to withdraw from. Egypt suggested international arbitration and Shamir refused. A decision to transfer it to arbitration was only possible with Levy's vote. Finally Egypt won the case and regain Taba.

[66] Interview with Michael Eitan, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

[67] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

The military option itself was not enough to put an end to it. The Israeli cabinet therefore debated the best solution to this predicament. As mentioned earlier, the cabinet, since its establishment in 1984, was torn by differences of opinion, clashes of personalities, and different ideological stands between its main components, Likud and Labour. The onset and continuation of the Intifada only deepened these differences. As a consequence, the government was paralysed and was not able to decide on the issue of peace. It was obvious that neither Likud nor Labour could impose any course of action, partly because each had veto power over the other and partly because neither of them could form a government without the participation of the other. This reality revealed itself when Peres, in his capacity as Foreign Minister, reached the London Agreement with King Hussein in April 1987. Peres felt genuinely that there was a partner to talk to and that an opportunity had offered itself. It was the first time in the history of the clandestine meetings between King Hussein and Israeli leaders that the King had agreed to start negotiations without preconditions. Jordanian officials had always insisted on an Israeli commitment to a complete withdrawal from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, before entering into negotiations.

Nonetheless, this initiative was blocked because Shamir and the Likud rejected the idea that Israel attend an international conference. The idea of an international conference was an anathema to Likud, and to Shamir in particular, because in such a conference, they believed Israel would be forced to make territorial concessions. This would, in turn, undermine Israel's long-term claims to sovereignty over the Occupied Territories. So, with the eruption of the Intifada and the lack of decision-making potential, Shimon Peres told his Labour colleagues that he was 'totally fed up with Shamir's complete rejection of political moves and that everything that had been achieved concerning the

peace process had been totally destroyed.'[68] Peres meant that Shamir's rejection of the London Agreement and his uncompromising position with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict in general were responsible for the eruption of the Intifada. To a large extent, Peres was correct in his assessment. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Israel's policies of holding on to the status quo in the West Bank and Gaza and of preventing the Palestinians from having political freedom were responsible for the outbreak of the Intifada. Shamir thought that the Intifada should not force the hand of the cabinet to take the initiative.[69] Indeed, Shamir has subsequently claimed that the Intifada did not change his mind, but only deepened his differences with Shimon Peres over finding a solution.[70] His position was that the only course of action he was prepared to consider was the implementation of the autonomy plan according to the Camp David Accords.

The disagreement between the two parties peaked following Shamir's rejection of the Shultz plan of March 1988. The continuation of the Intifada, the brutality of the IDF in handling the demonstrations, and the daily coverage by the international media of the activities led the United States to seek a way that could promote peace among the conflicting parties (the role of the external factors will be discussed in further details in Chapter Six). It was against this background that the Shultz plan was presented. Shultz proposed the following: a ceremonial international conference with the objective of providing peace and security for all states in the region based on Resolution 242 that would lead to direct negotiations between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, Israel and Lebanon, and Israel and Syria; and recognition of the legitimate rights of the

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[68] *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/0060, I, January 28, 1988.

[69] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

[70] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

Palestinians. The conference would neither have the power to impose an agreement nor the power to veto any agreement reached among the parties.[71] The Palestinian issue would, it was envisaged, be discussed in the negotiations between the Israeli and the Jordanian-Palestinian delegations, as one part of the package that was the whole initiative. Shultz suggested a period of six months for negotiating a transitional arrangement starting from May 1, 1988 which would lead to an implementation nine months later. Negotiations on the final status, it was envisaged, could be concluded within a year. This plan did not mention the PLO and thus was consistent with both Labour and Likud stands.

Though the Shultz initiative was hardly biased toward the Palestinian cause—even falling short of the minimum conditions that either Jordan or the Palestinians could accept—Shamir and the Likud ministers rejected it. The plan was the subject of bitter debate, not least because Labour leaders were in favour of it. Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated, in one of his lectures in March 1988, that Israel must respond positively to the Shultz initiative.[72] He argued that Israel should strive to reach an agreement with Jordan through which Israel would relinquish parts of the Occupied Territories, agreeing to Jordanian sovereignty over the evacuated territories.[73] The Labour ministers, in particular Rabin, who were traditionally far more sensitive than Likud to the opinion of the United States, were also concerned about the implications of not seeming to respond positively to the peace initiative.[74] In an exchange between Shamir and Peres, the latter

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[71] *Jordan Times*, March 15, 1988.

[72] *Davar*, March 27, 1988.

[73] *Davar*, March 27, 1988.

[74] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, February, 2000.

responded by saying to Shamir: 'If the deadlock persists and we don't take part in the peace process, if we don't adopt a diplomatic option with Jordan, we will be left with the PLO.'[75] Remember, both the Likud and the Labour were opposed to the PLO. Peres was the most enthusiastic among his cabinet colleagues to the idea of actually having Jordan as a partner. He believed the way to undermine what he perceived as the high international standing of the PLO was to convince Jordan to co-operate with Israel. Appreciating Jordan's inter-Arab calculations and constraints, Peres was convinced that the best way to involve it was by convening an international conference that would lead to direct negotiations with Jordan and to exchange 'land for peace'.

Likud's rejection of the Shultz plan in April 1988 stemmed from their dislike and suspicion of the idea of an international conference and their conception of the nature of this conference. First, Shamir believed that a conference with the participation of five member states in the Security Council would actually be harmful for Israel. Such a conference would, he envisioned, impose a solution against Israel's interests. He believed that it would force the country to give up parts of the 'land of Israel'.[76] Second, his opposition arose because of his unwillingness even to start negotiations. Shamir was aware of Jordan's inability to start direct negotiations with Israel without the backing of the Arab states and in particular the Palestinians. In addition, he was aware that without the convening of an international conference, the prospects for negotiations with Jordan were slim. In reality, he did not want to negotiate with Jordan over the future of the Occupied Territories. Hence, his rejection of the idea of an international conference was

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[75] Peretz Kidron, 'Divided They Stand,' *Middle East International*, no.322 (April 2, 1988), p.7.

[76] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

tantamount to the rejection of negotiating a peaceful settlement based on the 'land for peace' formula. King Hussein's options were either to engage in direct negotiations with Israel provided that there was a commitment on the Israeli side to withdraw from all the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem (this was the only way Hussein could bypass the PLO or break off with the Arab consensus) or to negotiate under the umbrella of international conference and in this case territorial concession would be possible. Shamir held that there was no need for such a conference and direct negotiations with Jordan were the only way to achieve peace.[77] One might speculate that the motive behind his rejection was that he felt that it would be too dangerous for Israel because of the possibility of conceding land, a matter Shamir opposed ideologically.

This position of Shamir made it impossible for Jordan to even think of direct negotiations without the backing of the PLO. Shamir was ready to start negotiations with the Jordanians without preconditions but would not deviate from the Camp David Accords which gave the Palestinians autonomy.[78] However, he and his close ally, Minister Moshe Arens, did not vote in favour of the Camp David Accords. According to Shamir, there had been two reasons for this. These were the following:

> [First he] was opposed in principle to the evacuation of Israeli towns and villages as stipulated in the agreement. Second, [he] objected to the precedent set by our withdrawal to the June 1967 armistice lines.[79]

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[77] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

[78] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

[79] Yitzhak Shamir, 'Israel at 40: Looking Back, Looking Ahead,' *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 66, no.3 (1988), p.579.

As a consequence, a man like Shamir who opposed peace with Egypt because it entailed a precedent of withdrawal from Sinai (which was never claimed by the Jews as part of the biblical land) could not be expected to be forthcoming when it came to withdrawal from any part of the West Bank or Gaza (which for him were part and parcel of the 'Land of Israel'). He stated that he could not relinquish any part from the territories because he had fought all of his life for the 'Land of Israel'.[80]

Labour on the other hand, and its leader Shimon Peres, believed that a political solution to the Palestinian problem might be attained with Jordan. In a meeting with the Labour party, in April 1988, he insisted that Jordan was still ready to embark on negotiations in accordance with the London Agreement.[81] He was in favour of the Shultz initiative and he argued, repeatedly, that if Israel could hold on to the status quo, then it would be possible for the PLO to step in, at the expense of Jordan. Peres' sense of urgency, like that of all doves, was intense.[82] He argued that if there would be no start of the peace process, it would be highly possible that war would erupt between the Arabs and Israel. As a consequence, it would be in Israel's interest to avert war by embarking on negotiations with them.[83]

As was discussed in the previous chapter, a central feature of the Labour Party considerations for the future of the Occupied Territories had been, since the 1970s, the

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[80] *Jerusalem Post*, November 15, 1987.

[81] *Ha'aretz*, April 29, 1988.

[82] What characterised doves within Labour was that they believed that should Israel want to avoid another costly war, looking for a political solution to the Palestinian problem. The Intifada enhanced this sense of urgency—one which the hawks within Labour, to the contrary did not feel.

[83] *Ha'aretz*, March 22, 1988.

demographic issue. Labour used demographic arguments to convince the Israeli public of the necessity for territorial compromise not only in order to achieve peace and security, but also to maintain a democratic-Jewish state. The Intifada strengthened this demographic argument as it proved that coexistence between Palestinians and Jews was impossible under occupation. Rabin, therefore, argued that Israel should give up the populated areas of the West Bank and Gaza in order to rid itself of around 1.5 million Palestinians.[84] Like all other Labour members, Rabin thought that the idea of Greater Israel (which encompasses the West Bank and Gaza) was incompatible with a democratic Jewish state. In his opinion, should Israel annex the West Bank and Gaza, it would then have two options: either to have a racist state in which one people rule over the other, or give the Palestinians (35% of the total Israeli population) democratic rights, thus creating a bi-national state.[85] Rabin, of course, advocated a Jewish democratic state and he thought only a Labour-led government could achieve such a goal. He, who had never attached any importance to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, changed his mind, as the intensity of the Intifada mounted.[86] Early in June 1988, Rabin began meeting some of the local Palestinian leaders in order to talk with them about the current situation. This was, in fact, a departure from his previously held position that Israel should not talk to them as long as the Intifada continued. The meetings were consistent though with his new belief that the Intifada gave the local Palestinians the chance to lead the Palestinian national movement as opposed to the PLO being in control. The meetings continued and influenced Rabin's political strategy when he pressed the NUG

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[84] *Ha'aretz*, September 9, 1988.

[85] *Ha'aretz*, September 9, 1988.

[86] Robert Slater, *Rabin of Israel, a Biography* (London: Robson Books, 1993), p.329.

to adopt the election plan, something which will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

To sum up, the Intifada had a huge impact on the political discourse in Israel over the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While it further convinced Labour that the idea of territorial compromise was the solution, Likud remained immutable in its ideological position. Labour's efforts to win over Likud were fruitless. Likud remained adamant in opposing any peace initiative whether internal or external. Hence, no concrete and agreed upon answer came from the government because of differences among its members—especially with the election very close. The next section thus deals with the Israeli election, which took place under the shadow of the Uprising.

The Intifada and the 1988 Election

The outbreak of the Intifada marked the beginning of the election campaign in Israel. It was the main issue of contention by the different parties. According to pre-election polls, it drew attention to key concerns such as security, peace, and the territories. The importance of these polls lay in the fact that they indicated to the campaigners what was the public mood. One example was a poll conducted three months before the election by the Institute of Applied Social Research and the Smart Family Communication of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (a neutral academic institution): sixty percent chose the issues of peace and security as the most important issues.[87] This section looks at how the Intifada impacted the prospects of both Likud and Labour in the 1988 general election.

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[87] Don Peretz and Sammy Samooha, 'Israel's Twelfth Knesset Election: An All-Loser Game,' *Middle East Journal*, vol. 43, no.3 (Summer 1989), p.389.

Unsurprisingly, the Labour campaign for the election focused primarily on foreign policy and issues of peace and security because of the Intifada. Its platform for the Knesset election read: 'the central goals of the Labour Party are security, peace and the preservation of a democratic-Jewish state with a large Jewish majority maintaining full equality for all its citizens.' And then it clarified this point by stating that

> A principal goal of a government led by the Alignment will be to break the political deadlock, which has persisted since the Likud undermined the peace initiatives of Shimon Peres. Renewal of a process of negotiation with Jordan and the Palestinians will occur only if a government headed by the Alignment can be formed.[88]

The Labour party leadership maintained during 1988 that the best path to defeat the Intifada and avert another inter-state war was to embark on peace negotiations with Jordan under the umbrella of the proposed international conference. Peres, who was the dominant Labour personality during the campaign (due to the illness of Uzi Bar'am, the Secretary-General of the party) opted for a bold campaign strategy according to which he singled out peace as the most important issue facing Israel's future. This strategy was diametrically opposed to Labour's previous campaigns where such issues were normally blurred. Peres' focus on peace and foreign policy was a deliberate move in order to stress the differences between Labour and Likud on the issue of peace. Peres' main argument was that Israel had in Jordan, for the first time, a partner who was willing and ready to negotiate and one which allowed a bypass of the PLO which meant that a Palestinian state could never be established. Accordingly, Peres was clear that in order to get negotiations started, Israel must be prepared to attend an international conference so as to secure Jordanian participation and to offer territorial compromise to conclude peace treaties. During the campaign, Peres focused on the inevitability of war should

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[88] Quoted in Efraim Inbar, op. cit., p.161.

the conflict remain unresolved.[89] He felt that the continuation of Israeli rule over millions of Palestinians against their will would only result in war.

As a consequence, Labour's television campaign publicised the newly formed Council for Peace and Security. This Council was formed by reserve generals, many of them Labour's supporters. Their argument at that time was that it was not necessary to hold the entire West Bank to ensure security. The generals advocated partial withdrawal coupled with strict security arrangements such as demilitarisation of the evacuated areas.[90] Their argument was repeatedly presented in order to justify the idea of some form of territorial compromise. To counter this argument, Likud opted for presenting a completely different strategic argument. In the campaign, they introduced former generals who argued that Israel's lack of strategic depth entailed holding the territories in their entirety. They regarded any concession of land in the West Bank as a security risk.

Throughout the election campaign, Labour leaders also emphasised the crucial demographic considerations. In an interview, Peres stressed that

> We can decide on anything but maintaining the status quo. Why? Because there is an Arab birth rate that is twice as (sic) ours. The demographic change is more significant than all the geographical change that has taken place in the past.[91]

Two weeks before the election, Peres declared that if his party were to be elected and he were to be a Prime Minister, his first task would be to revive the Shultz initiative and

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89 Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

90 Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

91 *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/0038/A/6, January 1, 1988.

convene an international conference for direct negotiations.[92] Labour's doves such as Yossi Beilin—and the party leader, Shimon Peres—hinted that the densely populated Gaza Strip should be handed over to Arab sovereignty.

Though Peres and his Labour associates were much more flexible than the Likud and Shamir, events were eventually to play into the hands of Shamir. According to many studies, the Intifada had led the Israeli public, at least in the short-term, towards a hawkish stand.[93] Given the tie between the two big parties, this gave the Likud the extra votes necessary for Shamir and his party to win the Knesset election. However, this does not mean that the Intifada was the decisive factor in the outcome of the election. It only focused attention on vital issues on which each party offered clear differences.

Yet another ramification of the Intifada, one which in fact influenced Peres personally and the Labour Party in general, was King Hussein's announcement a few months before the election that Jordan intended to sever administrative and legal ties with the West Bank. In a speech to the nation, the King declared that Jordan would never speak for the Palestinians and that the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians was the PLO.[94] It was a clear message to the Israelis that the Jordanian option was not feasible and that they should talk to the PLO if they were really interested in finding a solution. In fact, the king's decision was a turning point in the history of the peace process and in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Asher Susser, former director of the Moshe Dayan Centre at

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[92] *Davar*, October 17, 1988.

[93] A summary of the main findings of different studies on the impact of the Intifada is found in the Giora Goldberg, Gad Barzilai and Efraim Inbar study on *The Impact of Intercommunal Conflict: The Intifada and Israeli Public Opinion* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute, 1991).

[94] Al Rai, August 1, 1988.

Tel Aviv University, argues that for the first time in history, the King of Jordan was admitting that the Palestinians were not just a partner but an equal partner.[95] In fact, the disengagement decision sealed the fate of the Jordanian option.

Jordan's decision to disengage from the West Bank should be understood as a direct result of the Intifada. Daily events in the Occupied Territories produced a local Palestinian leadership and gave them some prominence. Not only was this leadership determined to end the Israeli occupation, it was also determined to eliminate the Jordanian's influence in the West Bank. This was reflected in the tenth communiqué[96] of the Intifada, which called *inter alia* on the Palestinian deputies in the Jordanian Parliament 'who were appointed by the King...to promptly resign their seats and align with their people. Otherwise, there will be no room for them on our land.'[97] The King regarded this statement as a 'horrible sign of ingratitude'[98] but, according to his then political advisor Adnan Abu Odeh, he soon realised that his strategy of substituting the partnership of Palestinians in the West Bank for that of the PLO had failed. In fact, the King's decision came when he had become disillusioned about the prospect for convening an international conference. His diplomatic initiative was failing. His agreement with Peres was defeated. Peres had not lived up to his promise to the King that if their agreement were to be obstructed by Shamir, Peres, in this case, would withdraw from the government in order to force an early election. Another reason for

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[95] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[96] The Intifada leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip issued successive communiqués in which it outlined for the participants in the Intifada what should be done for a week or two. They also reflected the positions of this leadership of all initiatives and policies taken by the parties concerned.

[97] Quoted in Adnan Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process* (Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), p.225.

[98] Ibid., p.225.

Hussein's decision was connected to the Arab summit of June 1988 (branded as the Intifada Summit) in Algeria. In the summit's final communiqué, the Arab leaders reassured the world that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians and that financial support to the Intifada was to be channelled through Jordan and the PLO, not through Jordan alone. The combination of these factors greatly influenced King Hussein. Hence, he realised that in order to prevent the Intifada from spilling over into Jordan, disengagement was a rational choice.

The PLO leadership was surprised by this decision. At the beginning, there was some suspicion that the King was harbouring an ulterior motive.[99] In Palestinian circles there were fears that Hussein was setting a trap. It was feared that it was a political manoeuvre aimed at undermining the position of the PLO.[100] By disengaging from the West Bank, it was argued, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories would soon realise that they could not run their daily life without the bureaucratic and financial links to Jordan and, therefore, Palestinians would come back to him. These fears persisted for a period of a few years. Ten months after Hussein's decision, Salah Khalaf (one of the top leaders of the PLO) in an interview claimed that:

> We knew that the King had not made his decision for the benefit of the [Palestinian] cause. I believe personally that the King was betting that the PLO would not be capable of making an initiative. The bet was that either there would be a failure to take a decision, or failure to implement it, and in either case the PLO would have to go back to him.[101]

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[99] Ibid., p.227.

[100] Hassan Barari, *Jordan and the PLO: A Troubled Partnership, 1982-88*, Unpublished MA Dissertation (University of Leeds, 1995), p.57.

[101] Quoted in Andrew Gowers and Tony Walker, *Behind the Myth, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian* Revolution (Great Britain: W. H. Allen, 1990), p.291.

However, measures taken by the King immediately after the decision to disengage refute these claims. He actually abolished the Ministry of Occupied Territories Affairs, cancelled the five-year development plan designed to help the Palestinians in the West Bank, reconvened the Parliament without the West Bankers, and stopped paying salaries to around 16,000 employees in the West Bank. Hussein's decision was primarily elicited by the Intifada. In an interview given to Professor Avi Shlaim in London on December 3, 1996, the King asserted that 'it was the Intifada that really caused our decision on disengagement from the West Bank...I simply tried to help them [the Palestinians] by that decision.'[102] Palestinian claims and fears, though groundless, should be understood in the context of mutual mistrust and competition between Jordan and the PLO that have characterised their relations since the establishment of the PLO in 1964.

Hussein's decision embarrassed the Labour leadership just a short time before the election. Labour's platform for the election mentioned Jordan as a partner for the envisioned international conference. The Labour Party therefore went to the election without any real option. It was opposed to talks with the PLO, and Hussein made it clear that Jordan would not bypass the PLO. Hence, the only alternative avenue for the Israelis was to negotiate with the PLO, a matter that both mainstream positions in Labour and Likud adamantly opposed to at this juncture.

As the pressure from the Intifada and from Labour ministers mounted, Shamir decided to take the diplomatic initiative in order to alleviate pressure. Thus, the Israeli

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[102] Quoted in Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000), pp.457-8.

government endorsed a peace plan in May 1989 which called on the Palestinians to elect their representatives to negotiate an interim agreement with the Israelis. It is this plan that is discussed in the following section.

Another National Unity Government and another Peace Initiative

Likud emerged as the victorious party in the 1988 election with 40 seats as opposed to 39 seats for Labour and Shamir was asked to form a working coalition. Theoretically, he had two options.[103] The first was to form a narrow government with the radical right and the religious parties (the right, including the Likud, secular radical right, and religious parties had 65 seats).[104] A second option was to set up a national unity government with Labour. Initially, Shamir chose to negotiate with the right and with the religious parties.

However, he was not keen on a narrow government for two reasons. First, for intra-party considerations, he was concerned about the implications of such a choice on the power struggle within Likud. A narrow government would mean that his rivals Sharon, Levy, and Modai receive key ministries; the defence, foreign and finance respectively. This, in turn, would make them highly visible figures in Israeli politics. That would be a 'nightmare' for Shamir since in such a scenario the 'constraint ministers' would take advantage of their positions, would pose a more credible threat to his position as a leader of the Likud, and would help prepare the ground for his succession. A second reason was that Shamir's inclusion of the religious parties might mean that he had to accede to

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103 Dani Korn & Boaz Shapira, *Coalition Politics in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, Publisher, 1997),p.326, (in Hebrew).

104 Ibid., p.325

their increasingly high demands.[105] As a consequence, Shamir secured a narrow coalition with the right and then turned to Labour to negotiate a coalition government from a strong position.[106] In the coalition agreement with Labour, Shamir (who did not want to repeat the same arrangement of the previous NUG and who was in a position to form a government without Labour) insisted that there would be no rotation of the premiership as had been the case in 1984.

Unlike Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres was opposed to the NUG with Likud. The doves in the party lobbied against joining Likud in the government. They defeated this move in the Party Leaders Bureau (the highest committee within the party). However, Peres was forced to respond to demands to join the government from the Histadrut and Kibbutzim in order to save them from a financial bankruptcy.[107] Thus, he joined Rabin who was interested in keeping the defence portfolio and the two men threw their weight behind this idea. Peres, after his electoral defeat, was more concerned about his position as the leader of the party.[108] Accordingly, joining the government with Likud and delivering key positions to his rivals would save him from yet another contest against

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[105] With the except of the NRP who has been advocating an aggressive settlement policy in the occupied territories, the other religious parties showed less interests in foreign policy and security issues. Instead, they would always ask for a list of demands as a price for joining and supporting a government. Their demands have been financial in order to finance the *Yishevot* (religious schools). They asked Shamir to change the law of who is a Jew? They sought to change the law in order to be able to decide who is a Jew, and this would clash with the American Jewry and Shamir did not want that.

[106] Interview with Michael Eitan, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

[107] Historically, these institutions were dominated by Labour. They are affiliated with the Labour movement. In 1988, they suffered from heavy debts and a precarious financial situation. It was believed that should Labour join the government and a Labour minister assume the Ministry of Finance, he would be able to channel enough funds to these institutions to save them.

[108] Neill Lochery, *The Israeli Labour Party in the Shadow of the Likud* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1997), p.147.

Rabin.[109] The Central Committee of the Labour party approved joining the government. Rabin became Defence Minister and Peres the Finance Minister. However, to justify Labour's participation in the government with Likud, and to convince the doves (whose sense of urgency was greatly enhanced by the Intifada) of the necessity of such an act, Rabin and Peres made their support for the NUG conditional on the progress of the peace process. Rabin and Peres promised that if there were no progress in the peace process then Labour would bring down the government by withdrawing from it.

Since the outbreak of the Intifada, the doves within Labour had pressed for a political initiative to end the conflict with the Palestinians. A Member of the Knesset, Haim Ramon, a young rising star in Labour argued that:

> The Intifada erupted because the Likud destroyed the chance for negotiations with Jordan...the military solution is not possible...the only solution is to talk with anyone who is ready to recognise the existence of Israel and its right to live in security and peace.[110]

His use of the word 'anyone' is indicative because, as we will see in the next chapters, the PLO met these conditions and therefore came to qualify as a partner. As a consequence Rabin, who was gradually moving towards advocating a Palestinian option and some type of self-determination, declared his peace plan in January 1988. The Intifada had had a sobering effect on Rabin. Although he had committed to Peres to leave the NUG if necessary, he did believe in the necessity of maintaining it, if at all possible, and pressed Shamir to adopt a peace initiative.[111] He suggested a peace plan

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[109] Rabin had always preferred the portfolio of defence. As a consequence, as far as he was a defence minister, he would not challenge the leadership of Peres. However, should Labour be in opposition, Rabin would have always challenge Peres over the leadership of the party.

[110] *Proceedings of the Knesset*, December 6, 1989, (in Hebrew).

[111] Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace, From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), p.23.

based on elections in the Occupied Territories so that the Palestinians could choose their representatives to negotiate an interim agreement with Israel. Rabin stipulated that the Palestinians pledge to put a six-month moratorium on the Intifada in order to prepare for the election.[112] Shamir, who was unable to put an end to the Intifada and was under pressure from the Labour Party, as well as subject to increasing American pressure, agreed to Rabin's election proposal. Shamir announced his plan for elections in the West Bank and Gaza and the government endorsed it on May 14, 1989.

Shamir proposed holding free and democratic elections in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in an atmosphere devoid of violence and terror. The aim of these elections was to choose Palestinian representatives from the Occupied Territories to negotiate an interim agreement with the Israeli government that would enable them to establish a self-governing authority. This five-year transitional period would be a test for coexistence and co-operation. During the interim period, matters pertaining to security, foreign affairs, and anything that is relevant to Israeli citizens in the West Bank and Gaza were to be in Israeli hands. Palestinians in the transitional period would be accorded self-rule. Shamir stipulated that the end of the Intifada had to come before implementing his election plan.[113] This plan ruled out any negotiations with the PLO and opposed a Palestinian state between Jordan and Israel in the immediate term. As Shamir said in his speech to the Knesset on May 17, 1989: 'our proposal is not directed at them [PLO]. We know that they do not have an interest in peace, our call is directed to our neighbours and the citizens of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza Strip.'[114]

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[112] Lea Rabin, op. cit., p.213.

[113] *Proceedings of the Knesset*, May 17, 1989, (in Hebrew).

[114] *Proceedings of the Knesset*, May 17, 1989, (in Hebrew).

The longer-term negotiations over the permanent solution would, it was envisaged, start as soon as possible but not later than the third year after the beginning of the transitional period. Participants to the final negotiations would be entitled to discuss any issue. The plan called on Jordan to participate in the negotiations over the permanent solution. The objectives of the final negotiations would be to establish peace and to arrange borders with Jordan.

Shamir's proposal was not an attractive one for either the Palestinians or the Arabs. First of all, it did not mention any role for the PLO and as a consequence would never be blessed by Yasser Arafat. Since 1974, the PLO has been the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Palestinians were not ready to lend their support to any plan that did not give the PLO the central role.[115] To the Palestinians, the plan was only an Israeli ploy aimed at putting an end to the Intifada and at disguising Shamir's intransigence[116] in the face of moderation on the part of the PLO. In fact, the PLO had made revolutionary decisions in November 1988. For the first time, it had accepted Resolution 242, recognised Israel's right to exist, and renounced terrorism in all its forms. On the Israeli side, many politicians, including Labour ministers, were not convinced of the feasibility of their government's plan. The Science and Technology Minister, Ezer Weizmann (Labour), for example, did not approve of the initiative. His rejection of the initiative stemmed from his belief that only the PLO could deliver. He maintained that 'negotiations with the PLO and Arafat must be conducted soon.'[117] The idea of elections was attractive, but the context in which it was presented was

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[115] Interview with Ghassan Khateeb, Geneva, May 28,2000.

[116] Interview with Ghassan Khateeb.

[117] *Ha'aretz*, May 12, 1989.

discouraging. An acceptance of this initiative could put a wedge between the PLO, and local Palestinians: and so the initiative died.

Shamir's plan anyway, was subject to severe criticisms from within Likud. Shamir knew that he could not continue without it splitting his party. The 'constraint ministers' attacked the plan and claimed that such a plan would lead to a Palestinian state in parts of the 'land of Israel'.[118] The three ministers challenged Shamir to put his plan to the Likud Central Committee. Moshe Arens deployed many efforts to persuade those members of the committee who opposed the plan. Arens argued that he, himself, was not happy with the plan but that rejecting it would hand power to Labour.[119] He also told the Committee of Foreign Affairs and Security of the Knesset that without this plan Israel's international standing would deteriorate.[120] He argued that there was no alternative and so the plan must be approved.

Despite this persuasive argument, the 'constraint ministers' were not moved. They specified that four clauses be added. The conditions were as follows: Palestinians from East Jerusalem will not take part in the election; negotiations will not start before the end of the Intifada; no negotiations with the PLO and rejection of a Palestinian state; and Jewish settlements will continue to be built in the territories.[121] In fact the clauses were designed to destroy the plan. Shamir had to give in to the 'constraint ministers' lest they

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118 Dani Korn, op. cit., p328.

119 *Ma'ariv*, June 6, 1989.

120 *Ma'ariv*, June 6, 1989.

121 Dani Korn, op, cit., p.328.

endanger his position as a Prime Minister and party leader.[122] Indeed, Sharon and Levy agreed together to defeat Shamir in the vote for the plan in the Central Committee; Shamir would have to resign. Their scenario was that Levy would be Prime Minster, Sharon Defence Minister, and the religious party would support their government forcing Labour to withdraw.[123] Shamir, who was motivated to keep the unity of Likud and maintain his position, had to respond positively to the 'constraint ministers'. Finally Shamir had to accede to the demands of the 'constraint ministers' and agreed to the addition of the four clauses. As a result, Shamir's plan was endorsed in the committee by 796 in favour to 642 against in the July 1989 meeting of the Central Committee.[124] Shamir was in a dilemma. Labour now threatened to withdraw from the government if these four clauses were not dropped. At the same time, if Shamir went along with the plan without the four amendments, he would alienate the 'constraint ministers' and a split in the party would be inevitable. He adopted delaying tactics in order to buy time and consolidate his position as premier and as undisputed Likud leader.

However, external pressures mounted when the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak put forward his ten-point plan in September 1989. This plan was meant to redesign the Shamir plan in a way that was acceptable to both moderates in Israel and the Arabs. Mubarak suggested that an Israeli and Palestinian delegations meet in Cairo to discuss the idea of an election in detail. The plan stipulated that Israel would accept the result of the polls, there would be international observers for the election, the elected representatives would be given immunity, the IDF would withdraw from the balloting

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[122] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[123] *Yediot Ahranot*, May 31, 1989.

[124] *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, ME/034, I, December 22, 1989.

area, Israel would put a freeze on settlement, Palestinians from East Jerusalem would participate, and Israel would have to commit itself to the 'land for peace' formula.[125]

The plan was, of course, the subject of much disagreement on the Israeli political scene. The radical left accepted it whereas the radical right rejected it. The working coalition was therefore divided evenly. Labour leaders had no problem in accepting the plan as it was in line with their views. However, the power struggle within the Likud prevented Shamir from being more dynamic. The 'constraint ministers,' who ideologically had never stuck to the idea of Greater Israel as an article of faith, were posturing by fomenting anti-Labour and anti-peace feelings. This should be understood in light of the power game (who would replace or succeed Shamir) within Likud. This game had its own dynamic and could have led to a split in the party. As a consequence, the Shamir-Arens camp had to manoeuvre in such a way as not to lose its position and influence within Likud, as well as to maintain governmental unity. Shamir understood that as long as he could manipulate his partners in the government and keep land, his position was unassailable. But this time was different. Labour was united behind Peres and Rabin with regard to the issue of peace. Thus, under the threat from Sharon, Shamir rejected the Mubarak ten points. As a result, understanding between Rabin and Shamir deteriorated and the ground was laid for the disintegration of the NUG which finally took place in March 1990 following Shamir's rejection of US Secretary of State James Baker's initiative.

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[125] Max Rodenbeck, 'Mubarak Calls Shamir's Bluff,' *Middle East International*, no.359 (September 22, 1989), p.3.

The new US administration, which took office in January 1989, was rather different from its predecessor. Whereas Ronald Reagan had pursed a Middle East foreign policy which was based on a strategic understanding with Israel, Bush and Baker sought to pursue a more even-handed policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. On different occasions, they spelled out their rejection to Shamir's settlement policies. They both understood that territorial compromise was the key to a solution. In a speech to the American-Israel Public Affair Committee (AIPAC) on May 22, 1989, James Baker unequivocally stated that 'For Israel, now is the time to lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of a Greater Israel.'[126] He maintained that pressure when he put forward his five-point plan in December 1989. Baker thought that 'there was a way to bridge the distance between Shamir's four points and Mubarak's ten points.'[127] The plan aimed at holding a dialogue between Palestinian and Israeli delegations in Cairo. It states that the Israeli delegation only attend the meeting after a satisfactory list of Palestinian representatives has been worked out. More importantly, the plan stated that Israel would attend on the basis of Shamir's plan.[128] Despite its clear pro-Israel position, and its granting of a veto power for Israel over who would represent the Palestinians, the PLO agreed whereas Shamir rejected the idea.[129]

Baker tried, to no avail, to persuade Shamir that his five-point initiative was in fact good for Israel and had the potential to lead to peace. Shamir remained unconvinced. The

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[126] James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy, Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), p.121

[127] Ibid., p.124.

[128] Ibid., pp.115-132.

[129] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

main point of contention was over who would represent the Palestinians. Shamir refused to have any Palestinian from East Jerusalem and from outside the Occupied Territories—even deportees who were legally from the West Bank and Gaza—as players in these negotiations. Baker and Bush came to the conclusion that as long as Shamir was head of the government, there would be no chance for negotiations to get started. Baker blamed Shamir publicly and announced that he would not interfere unless he is sure that the other party is serious. Baker said '...everybody over there should know the telephone number is 1-202-456-1414. When you are serious about peace, call us.'[130]

The rejection of Baker's five-points was the last nail in the coffin of the NUG. The Labour party, who had conditioned its participation in the NUG on the progress in the peace process, came to the conclusion that Shamir would never budge and was only playing for time. Peres lived up to his pledge and in March 1990, he gave Shamir an ultimatum that if he did not accept Baker five points, Labour would withdraw from the coalition. Shamir responded by sacking Peres and, as a result, Labour ministers resigned. In the subsequent motion of no-confidence, all Labour members voted against the government decisively contributing to its fall.

However, Shimon Peres (who was chosen by the President of Israel to form a government) failed to put together a working coalition with the religious parties. As a result, Shamir was again given the opportunity to form a government and he succeeded in forming a right-of-centre government. It was clear that with such a government, the prospect for peace was nil. Despite this, the Shamir government (under American pressure) was forced to go the Madrid Peace Conference. His government remained

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130 James Baker, op. cit., p.131.

intransigent however; for a breakthrough to come it was imperative that Labour should be in power.

Conclusions

It has been argued in this chapter that the Intifada was a watershed in the Arab-Israeli conflict with several far-reaching implications. It was the first time in the post-Six-Day War that Palestinians in the Occupied Territories had taken the struggle against the Israeli occupation into their own hands. The eruption and continuation of the Intifada came to refute the assumptions held by many in Israel, in particular the right wing, that the occupation was benign and costless and that there was a lack of political or revolutionary sentiments on the part of the Palestinians. Indeed, the Intifada challenged the utility and feasibility of the status quo for Israel and it accentuated the necessity of finding a political solution to the Uprising.

The fact that the Intifada proved resilient as well as effective had a direct impact on the intra-party and inter-party politics in Israel. It also influenced the internal relations of the governing coalition in Israel. It forced it to look for a solution other than the military one. Its influence on intra-party politics was more salient in Labour, in which it accelerated the ascendance of the dovish trend that the Labour Party had come to adopt in a gradual way. The Intifada strengthened the doves' position in the party, as they pushed for changes to be introduced in the party's platform. It also affected the hawks in the party, Rabin, in particular, who had thought of the conflict only in terms of an inter-state one. He was forced to change positions and acknowledge that the Intifada could not be dealt with by employing military force only. This change was of significant value as Rabin, who was widely respected in Israel for his credibility and his

credentials as 'Mr. Security', started to lean toward a Palestinian option. He was compelled to enter into talks with local Palestinian leaders in order to advance a political solution. His political moves were of great importance because they put Shamir, of Likud, in a position whereby if he did not adopt or approve a political initiative, his position as Prime Minister could be undermined.

However, the short-term impact of the Intifada was that of strengthening the hawkish trend to an extent that helped Shamir win the 1988 election. As a consequence, the Labour Party, under the leadership of Shimon Peres, was destined to lose the election for the fourth time successively. Peres' electoral defeat was a severe blow to Israeli progress towards peace because it would be inconceivable that Israel should concede 'land for peace' under a Likud-led government. For peace to come, Israel had to be governed by the more pragmatic Labour Party. The Intifada, which had forced King Hussein to sever administrative and legal ties with the West Bank, therefore, indirectly led to Peres' embarrassment when he lost his favoured Jordanian option. It forced the Labour Party to look to the only possible alternative; the Palestinian option. This, as this thesis will demonstrate, was why Rabin sought to cultivate partners from among the residents of the Occupied Territories and also why a peace deal was eventually concluded.

Though Likud, under Shamir, did not introduce changes to its platform for the election of 1988, the Intifada had a great impact on his position and conduct in the party. Shamir, who was constantly challenged by three strong colleagues within Likud (Levy, Sharon, and Modai) had to respond to Rabin as well and consequently adopted Rabin's views regarding negotiating with elected representatives of the Palestinians in the

Occupied Territories. However, Shamir was not genuine in this initiative. It was meant to alleviate pressure from within and from without. His primary objective was to keep the unity of Likud, which meant satisfying the 'constraints ministers.' Accordingly, he acquiesced to internal pressure and refused all initiatives including Mubarak's ten-point plan and James Baker's five point plan. Here again the factional politics and power struggle within Likud only contributed to the domestic political immobilism that proved unable to respond to external developments. The Intifada, which continued until the Oslo accords in 1993, did affect domestic politics in a positive way by enhancing the dovish trend in Labour, but was not sufficient to break the immobilism itself.

The Intifada alone could not explain why Israeli leaders changed their mind and became more 'prone to peace'. It was an important factor that led to the change, but still one needs to understand another factor that helped facilitate Israel's road to peace; that was the Labour Party's victory in the 1992 election. A critical factor that led to Labour ascendance was the process of internal reforms, which characterised the party throughout 1991-1992. It is this reform of the way in which the party operated which forms the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
DEMOCRATIC REFORM WITHIN THE LABOUR PARTY: THE MOTIVE TO GAIN POWER

As was demonstrated in the course of the previous chapter, the Intifada convinced an increasing number of Israelis, in particular the hawks within the Labour Party, of the urgent necessity to negotiate a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, the prospects for such an approach was impeded by the fact that Likud was in power, either alone or sharing with the right wing parties. Shimon Peres, for instance, was not able to proceed with the London Agreement because of Shamir's rejection of the initiative. This fact was important because it was clear not only to the Israeli public but also to those external players engaged in the conflict, such as the United States, Jordan, and Egypt, that Israel's path to peace would be strengthened considerably through a Labour-led government. It was also widely believed within Israel, as well as outside, that the Labour Party, which had been traditionally associated with the notion of territorial compromise, would be capable of taking Israel along the peace path. As a result, Labour's victory in the 1992 election had tremendous consequences for the peace process. This chapter argues that without Labour in power, peace with the Palestinians and subsequently with Jordan could not have occurred. Hence, for Jordan and Israel to sign a formal peace treaty, the assumption of power by the Labour Party was a necessary precondition.

Yet as will be demonstrated, it was not simply a matter of Labour assuming power. Labour was also in need of a strong personality (the importance of personality will be discussed in detail in the next chapter), such as Yitzhak Rabin, first to secure an electoral

victory over Likud for the first time since the *mahapach* of 1977, and, second, to lead the nation to such an historic reconciliation with former enemies. This chapter demonstrates that the process of democratic reform within Labour (which was characterised by the adoption of a process whereby both the candidate for premiership and the list of candidates for the general election were chosen by members of the party instead of simply picked by the Central Committee) was of crucial importance in bringing about a change in the leadership of the Labour Party and in producing a more representative, responsive, and attractive list. Yitzhak Rabin could not have taken over the leadership of the party without the introduction of these 'American-style' primaries simply because Shimon Peres, due to his 15-years of leadership, enjoyed far greater influence within the party and control also of the party institutions.[1]

This chapter also explores the influence of the democratic reforms within the Labour Party—which began in 1988—on the ascendance of Yitzhak Rabin to the leadership of both the party and as Prime Minister of Israel. It is postulated that these changes influenced the peace process. It should be clear from the outset that the process of democratic reforms within Labour was driven in the first place by the desire to regain power.[2] However, these reforms contributed to the ascendance of many young doves within Labour and they in turn sought to introduce ideological changes in the party platform. These ideological changes were meant to facilitate a more conciliatory approach to the Palestinian problem. In fact, this dovish camp had always urged the party to proceed with peace. Therefore, the very fact that in 1992 Labour was able to

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[1] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000. In addition, most of the politicians and academics the author interviewed in Israel concurred with this point.

[2] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

form a government was of crucial consequence for the prospects for peace with the Arab states and the Palestinians.

This chapter consists of five sections. The first examines the electoral system in Israel and how this affected government coalition building. A second section reviews the process of internal democratic reforms within the Labour Party. A third deals with the selection of candidate lists to the Thirteenth Knesset and how this affected Labour's chances of defeating Likud. Another section is an attempt to analyse the 1992 election and the reasons behind Labour's eventual victory. The final section assesses the formation of the new government and its impact on the road to peace.

The Israeli Electoral System and Coalition Formation

Like most Western democracies, Israel elects its parliament (Knesset), which is made up of 120 members and to which the government is responsible. General elections are held once every four years unless the Knesset calls for earlier elections.[3] The electoral system in Israel derives it roots from the pre-state Jewish community (*Yishuv*) in Mandatory Palestine.[4] Immediately after the establishment of Israel in 1948, the first Israeli government decided that it would hold a general election by applying the same method used in the pre-state period for the elections to the Zionist Congress and to the elected assemblies of the *Yishuv*. It was believed that the electoral system would be utilised only for the election of the Constituent Assembly (the first Knesset) and after

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[3] Elections, unless the outgoing Knesset decides otherwise, shall be held on the third Tuesday of the Hebrew month of *Heshvan* (around November) of the year in which the Knesset tenure ends. But if the previous year is a leap year according to the Hebrew calendar, election shall be held on the first Tuesday of *Heshvan*.

[4] Mandatory Palestine refers to the whole of Palestine, which now comprises of both Israel proper and the Occupied Territories, under the British Mandate from 1920-1948.

that a new permanent electoral system would be enacted. However, those parties and factions that actually obtained representation under the old system were loath to alter the process lest any new system might work against what had quickly become vested interests.[5]

A central feature of this system that has prevailed despite some minor changes is the proportional representation list system, whereby the whole country is treated as a single constituency. When a list passes the 1.5 percent electoral threshold, it obtains representation in the Knesset.[6] Votes are counted and the allocation of seats in the Knesset is in direct proportion to the votes received by each list. The order of candidates on the list is of great importance because the higher the position on the list, the better the chance to actually obtain a seat. For example, if a party wins 20 seats, those seats are allocated to the first 20 candidates on the list.

Hence, the party that receives most votes is the pivotal one: and its leader is expected to form a working coalition.[7] This system remained until 1996. In that year the Prime Minister, for the first time in the history of Israel, was elected directly in a separate ballot. This new change, in fact, gave the elected Prime Minister more freedom and independence from his party in forming a government.

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[5] Vernon Bogdanor, 'The Electoral System, Government, and Democracy,' in Ehud Sprinzak and Larry Diamond (eds.), *Israeli Democracy Under Stress* (USA: Lynne Rienner Publication, 1993), p.84.

[6] The electoral threshold had been 1 percent prior to the general election in 1992.

[7] The only exception was in the period from 1984-88, when Israel was governed by a National Unity Government, where Labour and Likud agreed that Peres and Shamir rotate the premiership.

Despite the fact that the Israeli electoral system ensures a 'fair' representation of parties, it still has shortcomings, some of which are addressed in this section. These shortcomings have been the subject of much debate among Israelis. Debate occurred, especially, in the aftermath of the inconclusive results of the 1984 and 1988 elections.[8] In 1984, for instance, the inconclusive outcome (neither Likud nor Labour could form a government) of the general election forced both Likud and Labour to enter into a NUG. Many secular politicians from both Likud and Labour, as well as academics, felt the necessity to implement electoral reform in order to minimise the disproportionate power of religious parties. Since neither Labour nor Likud has ever gained an outright majority in the Knesset sufficient to form a government, they have opted for coalition with the smaller parties, the religious parties in particular. These choices indeed, increased the power of the religious parties to such an extent that it resulted in pressure for electoral reform. The concern was that the political influence of the religious parties was increasing over time to such an extent that their spiritual leaders (Rabbis who do not necessarily reside in Israel) could determine which of the major parties would be in or take power. This outcome was particularly obvious in April 1990, when Shimon Peres failed to put together a working coalition with one of the religious parties, Agudat Yisrael, because it's mentor (a rabbi who was residing abroad) intervened and ruled against joining a government under Shimon Peres.[9] This incident had a negative impact on the prospect for progress in the peace process. The result was the failure of Shimon Peres to form a government which compelled the President of Israel to ask Yitzhak Shamir to form a government.

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[8] Asher Arian, *Politics in Israel, the Second Generation* (New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers Inc, 1989), p.137.

[9] Dani Korn & Boaz Shapira, *Coalition Politics In Israel* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, Publisher, 1997), p.337, (in Hebrew).

Another feature of the electoral system in Israel, according to scholars such as Vernon Bogdanor, is 'the rigidity of its list system of proportional representation.'[10] Parties present lists for elections and the candidates are determined by the party institutions.[11] Accordingly, voters cast the ballots for lists of their choice and not for individuals. Voters cannot delete, change the order of, or add other names from different lists. There is no mechanism such as that of a by-election and accordingly when a Knesset member resigns or dies, his or her seat will be taken by the next on the list at the time of election. This proportional representation system is responsible for the fragmentation in the Knesset and consequently in Israeli politics.[12] Because of this system, there have traditionally always been more than 10 lists represented in the Knesset. This of course has made the forming of a government a difficult task.

A second characteristic of the electoral system in Israel is that the whole country is a single voting constituency and votes are counted on a national basis.[13] As a consequence, candidates do not represent geographical constituencies. The result is little contact with voters and thus Knesset members are not directly responsible to their voters. Because of the national list system, the voters play no role in either the composition of the list or the coalition formation.[14] One example of the independence of the elected lists from its voters was the Democratic Movement for Change (known in Hebrew as *Dash*). In 1977, this list won 15 seats in the Knesset. It took votes from

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[10] Vernon Bogdanor, op. cit., p.84.

[11] This method was the case in Labour until 1992 when Labour chose the list through the primaries system. Other parties such as Likud introduced primaries as after the 1992 elections.

[12] Interview with Mark Heller, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[13] Asher Arian, op. cit., p.135.

[14] Vernon Bogdanor, op. cit., p.87.

Labour contributing to Labour's first electoral defeat. Immediately after the election, *Dash* leaders decided to join the Likud-led government. It was assumed that those who voted for this list would have definitely preferred Labour to Likud and accordingly would not be happy to see *Dash* joining a Likud-led government. However, once the votes were cast, the voters had no influence whatsoever on the actions of the list. The importance of this characteristic lies in the fact that a Knesset member feels less responsible towards a certain constituency and hence his or her political performance is governed by the member's own political and/or personal calculations. Moshe Dayan, for instance, was elected to the 1977 Knesset on Labour's list. Yet, immediately after his election, having no constraints of constituency, he joined the Likud-led government.

A third characteristic of the electoral system is that the electoral threshold is very low.[15] This fact makes it possible for very narrow interests to be represented in the Knesset. One example of this was that of the Kach party. Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was widely known for his fascist anti-Arab attitudes, set up this party in 1971 and thereafter it participated in all general elections. The party had never passed the electoral threshold before 1984 but it then succeeded in gaining one seat. In its platform, Kach advocated the expulsion of all Palestinian Arabs from Israel and the Occupied Territories. The party was disqualified by the Israeli Central Election Committee on the ground that it advocated racist and anti-democratic principles. After its disqualification in 1988, the party subsequently disappeared from Israeli politics and its voters shifted their votes to the right wing Moledet (which advocated similar policies of transfer).[16]

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[15] Ibid., p.85.

[16] Myron J. Aronoff, *Power and Ritual in the Israeli Labour Part, A Study in Political Anthropology* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc, 1993), p.209.

The electoral system is, thus, arguably, responsible for the fragmentation of Israeli politics. This feature became acute following the first electoral defeat of Labour in 1977. The Israeli political system, according to Neill Lochery, had been one dominated by Labour.[17] Initially, the electoral system had left no significant impact on the way governments were formed, basically, because Labour was able to gain far more votes than any other party. As a consequence, its impact on the peace process was minimal. However, this was not the case after 1977. The political system was transformed from a multi-party system dominated by Labour to a competitive one with Likud and Labour competing almost neck-and-neck. The need for small parties increased and so did their influence on major issues such as those which dominated the Israeli discourse—peace and security. This was certainly the case in 1998 when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed the Wye River agreement[18] with Yasir Arafat only to be opposed by his coalition members within the government and his block in the Knesset. The agreement led to public recrimination among coalition members. As a result of the disagreement and differences among the coalition members, the government fell and early elections were called.[19]

In addition to the demands for reforms in the electoral system, there were also requests, made by many Labourites, for internal reforms within the Labour Party. The calls for internal reforms—as this chapter argues—were aimed at gaining power. Though these

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[17] Neill Lochery, *The Israeli Labour Party in the Shadow of the Likud* (Reading: Garnet Publishing Limited, 1997).

[18] The Wye River agreement was signed in November 1998 in the United States between Israel, under Netanyahu, and the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat. The agreement states that Israel will withdraw from 13.1 percent from the Occupied Territories.

[19] *The Jerusalem Post*, December 22, 1998.

democratic reforms within Labour were meant to gain power, they, as will be demonstrated, did in fact facilitate Labour's path to peace.

Democratic Reform within Labour

The Israeli Labour movement, in which the Labour Party played the key role, had been, to a great extent the main force behind the realisation of the Zionist dream in establishing Israel in 1948. The Labour movement had led the Zionist movement and thus had established its agenda. As a consequence, the Labour Party was the dominant party in Israel prior to 1977 to the extent that without it no government could have been formed. In all Labour-led governments, Labour dominated issues relating to defence and foreign policy and its authority in these matters was never seriously challenged by any other contender.

However, as was demonstrated in Chapter Two, Labour-led governments were not able to act decisively on the issue of peace with Jordan due, mainly, to intra-party differences rather than inter-party differences. Ironically, when Labour came to a broad consensus (territorial compromise with Jordan) in late 1980s, it had already lost its dominance in Israeli politics. Hence for peace to be achieved, Labour had to first win the general election, then form a peace coalition.[20] This section therefore provides an account of how the process by which Labour selected its list for Knesset elections led to Labour's loss of its electoral dominance in the period between 1977 to 1992.

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[20] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

Until the late 1980s, a few leaders, who were in unchallenged positions, such as Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, had controlled the Labour Party. Thus, Labour was hierarchically structured and the power was centralised in the hands of a few leaders. In fact, these leaders were in a position to decide who would be a candidate for the Knesset election and who would not.[21] The process by which candidates were chosen was simple: the leaders of the political bureau of the party chose the most loyal deputies in order to form a nomination committee. This committee prepared a list of candidates. The Central Committee of the party should approve and only rubber-stamped the list. This method, in fact, secured the selection of candidates who were clients of one of the top leaders. As Nawaf Massalha put it: 'without being a client to one of the patrons, your chance to be a candidate in a realistic position would be diminished.'[22] Myron Aronoff, a political scientist, argues that representation in the list to a large extent reflected the pattern of patron-client relationship.[23] In late 1960s and until 1974, Pinhas Sapir and Golda Meir, Yigal Allon, and Moshe Dayan were the patrons of Mapai, Achdut Havooda, and Rafi (the three factions of the Labour Party) respectively.

With the collapse of the factional system after 1974, two camps (around two patrons: Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin) emerged. The patrons fought to ensure that their major clients were placed in realistic positions in order to strengthen the formers' stature among the elite. As a result of this patron-client relationship, it was inconceivable for clients to voice ideological or political preferences different from those of their patrons without reducing their chances in future elections. However, the introduction of internal

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21 Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

22 Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000.

23 Myron J. Aronoff, 1993, op. cit.

reforms, to a great extent, liberated clients from their patrons and as a consequence, the clients were able to seek ideological change. On many occasions, those who were patrons had to adjust to the increasing demand by clients for a change. Shimon Peres, for instance, became more attentive to the positions of his clients and in particular Yossi Beilin. This change indeed helped the Party adopt an increasing dovish line.

The demands for internal reforms were given impetus after consecutive failures by Labour to regain political power. But the key question here is why did Labour fail in the first place? The answer is complex in that a host of factors led to the defeat of Labour at the polls in 1977. Scholars of course emphasise different reasons. For example, in his interesting analysis of the turnabout which occurred in 1977, Neill Lochery examined previous studies conducted by Israeli scholars and then categorised the explanations into four theoretical areas.[24] These frameworks emphasise different points, but are all interrelated.

The first explanation is the political culture framework. Proponents of this approach, such as Asher Arian, Etzioni-Halevy and Rina Shapira, stress the importance of demographic change. According to this framework, demographic changes in Israel, in fact, transformed the political culture and moved it somewhat to the right. This gradual change was coupled with Labour's failure to adapt to the transformation. Proponents of this explanation stress that traditional Labour voters tend to be older, with an Ashkenazi background whereas the typical Likud voters tend to be younger and of a Sephardi background. This difference was important, because during the 1970s, the demographic

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[24] Neill Lochery, op. cit., Chapter Three.

balance shifted towards Sephardim. More importantly, the shift in the demographic balance in favour of the Sephardim was simultaneously associated with a shift in the voting pattern of this growing constituency towards Likud. These Jews who were dependent on Labour-led governments for jobs and housing started gradually to support Likud instead of Labour from the mid-1960s onward. There were three reasons behind this gradual shift. First, they started to vote for Likud as a protest vote against the lack of opportunities and out of frustration. Second, Labour was seen as a middle class party whereas Sephardim were mainly low class. As a consequence, they supported a party (Likud) which expressed their concerns. Finally, Sephardim tended to be more hawkish with respect to the Arab Israeli-conflict. Upon their arrival in Israel, in the first decade after its establishment, the majority of them were allocated houses in areas bordering the Arabs. Because of clashes between Israel and its neighbours, coupled with infiltration,[25] they were the most affected of the Israelis by the conflict. As a consequence, they advocated harsher security policies against the Arabs. Likud, in its rhetorical attacks against the Arabs, reflected this orientation.

Another point relating to the demographic factor is that of age category. In the 1977 election, Labour's support among the young had declined to around half that of Likud.[26] The reasons for younger voters rejecting the Labour Party had to do with the conservative nature of the party. Following the establishment of the state, Labour was interested in preserving the position of earlier immigrants and gave little attention to the increasingly important constituencies such as what might be termed the youth vote. In

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[25] For the problem of infiltrations see Benny Morris, *Israel's Borders War, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[26] Neill Lochery, op. cit., p.52.

fact, the youth felt politically alienated because of the conservative nature of the Labour Party and its reluctance to introduce a more radical approach to both security and socio-economic issues. As a consequence, Likud became attractive to these constituencies.

However, in the early-1990s, the Sephardim and young constituencies became less identified with Likud due to the emergence of more nationalist parties to the right of Likud and because of the establishment of parties along ethnic lines, in particular Shas.[27]

A second explanation comes from the political economy framework. This framework, which is advocated by Michael Shalev, stresses that the dominant party 'must be able to perform the basic economic functions of satisfying the material interests of business.'[28] Neill Lochery points out three requirements for this: first, to develop a formula of economic growth that meets the interests of the party and the state as well. Second, to solve the problems of distributional conflicts, and finally to establish a link with the supportive international economic community.[29] These three were missing by the middle of the 1970s. The decline in the usefulness of the Histadrut (The National Workers Federation), problems linked to the distribution of capital gifts (aid and loans) to the security sector, and the difficulty in marrying the interests of the state to those of business all showed the failure to meet these requirements. All three together contributed to Labour's electoral defeat. However, with the passage of time, differences

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[27] Shas is an ultra-religious Sephardi party established before the 1984 general election in a protest over the inappropriate representation of the Sephardi sector in the list of Agudat Yisrael. Shas is considered as a non-Zionist party with a fundamentalist approach to religion and has sought to turn Israel to be a *Halacha* state (governed by Jewish Law).

[28] Neill Lochery, op. cit., p.57.

[29] Ibid., p.57.

between Labour and Likud in matters relating to the economy have been narrowing to the point of disappearing.[30]

A third possible explanation is the influence of the Arab-Israeli conflict in domestic politics. Among the advocates of this line of thinking, Baruch Kimmerling is the most outspoken. According to this framework, the capture of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967 triggered a public debate over the future of the Occupied Territories. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, Labour's policy towards the West Bank and Gaza should be understood within the framework of intra-party politics of the succession battle and personality problems. Three positions within Labour could be discerned: the functional approach, the territorialist approach (the Allon Plan), and the reconciliationist approach (for more details, see Chapter Two). Labour's position *vis-à-vis* the future of the West Bank, which had led to the status quo, was responsible for its decline. Its policies alienated the hawkish nationalists but more importantly, the liberals who believed in trading land for peace. However, events such as the Lebanon War and the Intifada left a moderating impact on the Israeli electorate, which benefited Labour in later elections.

The fourth explanation of why Labour's power decreased in 1977 is the political dynamics framework, which is concerned with the failure of successive Labour elites to respond to the changing dynamics of Israeli society.[31] As mentioned above, the highly centralised and oligarchic party structure failed to reform itself and adapt to the increasingly changing Israeli society, in particular following the 1973 War. Myron

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30 Interview with Avraham Burg, Jerusalem, February 16, 2000.

31 Myron J. Aronoff, op. cit.

Aronoff argues that:

> Control of the nominations process perpetuated the domination of the party by the elite and their client. The issue agenda and decision-making were effectively controlled by the elite, and controversial issues were suppressed. The ritualization of important aspects of politics contributed significantly to the further erosion of the responsiveness and effectiveness of the party.[32]

This oligarchic control of the nomination process by top leaders negatively affected the responsiveness of Labour and led to a lack of real representation of significant developing constituencies in the party Knesset faction, which, in turn, greatly contributed to the first electoral defeat in 1977.[33] For example, the Kibbutz movement (mainly Ashkenazi Jews) was over-represented, whereas other groups of Sephardi background were under-represented. Furthermore, many representatives were not the choice of their constituency but because they were clients of the top leaders.

The result, arguably, led to a detachment of the elite from the electorate. Following the first electoral defeat, little democratic reform was carried out. For example, in the 1981 election, half of the names for the Knesset list were chosen by the nominating committee, making the list more representative. However, as the other half were chosen by the party branches and the ordering of the names on the list was done by a special committee showed that the process of selecting as a whole remained oligarchic. The problem was so severe that even top leaders failed to understand the long-term and deep-rooted causes for the electoral defeat. As a consequence, no fundamental structural reforms were taken to make the party more responsive to its members, as well as to the wider public. Aronoff argues that the Labour leadership failure to give enough attention

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[32] Ibid., p.167.

[33] Ibid., p.190.

to the oligarchic procedures by which the Knesset list was chosen and its failure to modernise this method led directly to its electoral defeat.[34]

Taken together, these four frameworks might indeed account for the Labour loss in 1977. Nevertheless, Likud's ascendance to power marked the transformation of Israel's political system from a multi-party system dominated by Labour to a competitive multi-party system in which Labour lost its dominance. In the post-1977 era, the weakness of Labour's electoral position was exacerbated by two additional factors. First, Labour gradually lost of control of many state institutions, which deprived its leaders of the power of patronage (this previously helped Labour, especially in the Arab sector). The second factor was the transformation of Israeli politics from party politics to block politics. In this system, it is not enough for a party to receive more seats than others in order to form a government. The most important factor is to have a blocking majority. For example, in 1984 and during the Likud second government, the Labour Party had 49 seats compared with 46 for Likud. The problem, however, was that despite this majority, Labour was not able to form a government at the inter-block level. In another example, Labour gained 44 seats compared with 39 for Likud in 1984. However, neither was able to form a government because both the Labour and the Likud blocks received 60 seats. The only way out of this impasse was to form a national unity government.

Many Labourites felt that internal democratic reforms within the party were necessary if the party wanted to widen its public appeal and regain its power.[35] By the late 1980s the

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[34] Ibid., p.176.

[35] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

Labour Party had undergone major, albeit gradual, democratic reforms which had culminated in the adoption of American-style primaries for the selection of, both, the candidates to the Knesset, and the premiership, for the 1992 election. It should be stressed that the reforms came as a response to demands from within and were aimed mainly at winning the general election.[36]

The main figure behind the idea of such democratic reforms was Uzi Bar'am (a dovish Labourite). Baram was elected in 1984 as secretary-general of the party on the platform of democratic reform within the party. His narrow victory was evidence of the degree of the split within Labour over the issue of internal reforms. Baram argued that it was necessary to start reforms in order to strengthen the Central Committee, and to change Labour's image of being 'a closed, unbreathing, elderly, Ashkenazi, oligarchic body'[37] in the mind of the public. Not surprisingly, the opposition to such reforms came from the Kibbutz and Moshav Movements, which were, arguably, over-represented. However, they were not able to overcome the majority who supported Baram's initiative. Baram's effort paid off when the Labour Party selected its list for the 1988 election.

The candidate list for the Twelfth Knesset was selected in May 1988. Due to the introduction of a more liberal method of selecting the Knesset list, a marked change in the make up of the list was noticeable. This new list was the most representative and responsive up to this point.[38] For the first time in the history of the party, the

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[36] Interview with Reuven Hazan, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

[37] Myron Aronoff, op, cit., p.191.

[38] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

representation of various constituencies (urban, rural areas, and Kibbutzim) as well as ethnicity and age was, to some extent, in proportion to their distribution within the party. Many new groups, especially the young, were among those who were in realistic slots (positions in the list). The list contained one Arab candidate, 4 women, 13 new faces, and 15 of Sephardic background.[39] Despite this attractive list, Labour did not fare well but also did not fare too badly. This experience gave the party confidence to widen the primary system to include all Labour members.[40] Another consequence of this new method was that many young dovish candidates felt less dependent on their patrons and as a result they were able to present an ideological debate within the party concerning the path of the peace process. Unlike the young guard of Rafi who was more interested in power, the new young guard was more interested in introducing an ideological change that would distinguish the party from Likud. As a consequence, their efforts paid off. The platforms of the 1992 election became more dovish. One example of the dovishness of the platform was a paragraph that acknowledged the national right of the Palestinians. It reads:

> Israel will promote negotiations towards a peace agreement based on compromise with Jordan and the Palestinians. The agreement must be based...on the recognition of the rights of Palestinians including their national rights, and on the basis of their participation in determining their future.[41]

In summary, many changes within Israeli society contributed to the decline of Labour's dominance and the simultaneous ascendance of Likud. However, the transformation of the political system from one dominated by Labour to a competitive party system where

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[39] Neil Lochery, op, cit., p.131.

[40] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000.

[41] Quoted in Lochery, op. cit., p.198.

both Likud and Labour enjoyed near parity compelled Labourites to address the underlying cause of its decline; that is, a lack of representation and responsiveness. The opening up of the selection of the Knesset list in 1988 was only a step towards addressing that problem, which Labour did, as will be discussed below, successfully in 1992.

Selecting Candidates through Primaries

The adoption of the American style primaries by Labour in 1992 was revolutionary in Israeli politics. Labour decided that the selection of both the candidate to the premiership and the list to the Knesset should be through primaries, in which all due paying members of Labour would participate.

As was discussed above, the motives for such a change in direction was mainly a desire to regain political power. Those Labourites who supported the opening up sought to realise two objectives. The first was to bring about a change within the leadership of the party. Shlomo Avineri argues that:

> It was clear to almost every body that Labour's chances of winning power would be with Yitzhak Rabin as the head of the party and not with Shimon Peres. In fact, Peres suffered from an image problem of inelectability.[42]

Peres had already suffered four electoral losses. It was common knowledge that Peres was much more popular than Rabin within the party, but Rabin at the time was the most popular Israeli politician in Israel. As a consequence, most of those who supported the primaries, including Rabin himself, saw the contest as the most effective way of

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[42] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, January 31, 2000.

replacing Peres. The second objective was that primaries would result in a more responsive, representative, and attractive list.

There was another reason that motivated Labour to adopt primaries. The fact that Likud had selected its candidates' list to the 1989 election of the Histadrut through primaries gave Labour another incentive.[43] The success of Likud's attempt and the fear that Likud might adopt the same system for the general election accelerated the process within Labour.

On February 19, 1992, the Labour party selected its candidate for the premiership. Out of 152,000 due paying members of the party, 108,347 members cast their vote.[44] Four candidates ran for the contest. These were Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Ora Namir (female), and Yisrael Kessar (Secretary-general of the Histadrut). However, only Peres or Rabin stood a realistic chance of winning. Rabin's strategy relied on one theme: Labour would have a better chance under his leadership. His supporters argued that Labour had never lost an election except under Peres' leadership and thus a change was imperative if Labour sought to win the next general election. Peres' supporters countered the argument by saying that Rabin's popularity was actually to be found within Likud supporters and that when the time came they would vote for Likud. In order to increase Peres' chances of defeating Rabin, Peres' supporters reminded

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[43] Neill Lochery, op. cit., p.176.

[44] Ibid., p.201.

Labour's members of his great achievements, when he assumed the premiership (1984-86). They believed that Peres was the best Prime Minister that Israel had ever had.[45]

The results of the contest were in Rabin's favour. He gained 40.59%, whereas Peres received 34.8%, Kessar 18.77%, and Namir 5.44%. As the required threshold was actually 40 percent, the result meant that Rabin avoided a second round in which Peres might very well have fared better. In fact, the presence of other candidates worked in Rabin's favour. Peres, for example, was much more popular than Rabin in the Arab sector. But Kessar, who used his position as secretary-general of the Histadrut, was able to cultivate good relations with the Arab sector. He received more votes than any one else from this sector.[46] This means that in a second round, those who had voted for Kessar from the Arab sector would have most likely voted for Peres, thus tipping the balance in Peres' favour. In other words, the fragmentation of Peres' camp contributed to his defeat.

Another reason for Rabin's victory over Peres was the issue of with whom Labour would have a better chance to win enough seats to form the next government. Many, including Peres' supporters, reached the conclusion that Rabin's chances were higher and as a consequence they voted for Rabin.[47] The impression that Peres could not win was confirmed by the publication of the Lass report in May 1990. The report was the

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[45] In the interview with Ahmed Tibi, he stressed two points why Peres was an excellent Prime Minister. He argues that Peres assumed the premiership from 1984-86. During this period, Peres was successful in dealing with two important issues that justified his participation in the NUG. He was able to withdraw the IDF from Lebanon, and he was able to reduce inflation from more than 400 percent to around 20 percent.

[46] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000.

[47] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 30, 2000.

first investigation carried out by Labour to find out the reasons behind its electoral failure in 1988. Professor Yoram Lass chaired a committee, which had interviewed 250 party members.[48] The report contained two major findings of great consequences for the internal development of the party. First, the report blamed Peres personally for the defeat in the 1988 general election. Second, since regular members of the party would not participate in the selection of candidates, they could not identify with the party. Hence, the report concluded, Peres was unelectable and that it was a necessity to adopt primaries in order to rejuvenate the party.[49] Though Peres was, obviously, not happy with this report, given its logic, coupled with Peres' weakened intra-party position, resulting from his failure to put up a working coalition in April 1990, he had little choice but to accede to the primaries proposal.

Though Peres lost the contest to Rabin, his camp fared well overall in the primaries for selecting the candidate list for the Knesset. Hence, Peres emerged as the biggest winner in the primaries. This outcome showed that those who shifted their votes from Peres to Rabin for the selection of the candidate of the premiership were only driven by their belief that Labour, under Rabin, would win the general election. Almost all of Peres' close supporters were elected to high and realistic (assured election to the Knesset) slots in the list. All the 'Gang of Eight'[50] fared very well, especially, Avraham Burg, who was elected number three on the list behind Rabin and Peres. On the contrary, the Rabin camp, a hawkish one, did not fare well. Many of Rabin's close supporters, including ex-

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[48] Neil Lochery, op. cit., p.162.

[49] Ibid., p.162-3.

[50] The 'Gang of Eight' was a name given to generational young dovish Labourites in the late 1980s, who sought to introduce ideological change in the party platform. Yossi Beilin, Haim Ramon, and Avraham Burg, were among the group.

ministers and MKs (such as Avraham Katz-Oz, Michael Bar-Zohar, and Shoshana Arebli-Almoslino) failed to be elected.[51] The result of the primaries was, therefore, a very attractive and markedly more dovish list than the previous one.[52] The list contained 17 new faces, half of whom were of non-Ashkenazi background, as well as 4 women. Half of the selected candidates were young, including Yael Dayan (daughter of Moshe Dayan).

The selection of the candidate through primaries was hailed in Israel as a success. It made the party look fresh and more appealing.[53] For the first time, this system gave a degree of power to members of the party. The new system deprived the top leaders of the power of selecting or ordering the list of candidates. This change led to the election of candidates in realistic positions who were more independent of their patrons and who felt that their re-election depended on the members of the party, and not on their patrons. Previously, clients were in no position to oppose their patrons as was clear with Ben-Gurion and his supporters. One clear example of the radical change was the 'Gang of Eight', clients of Shimon Peres, but who were able to voice their minds publicly and challenge the party position with regard to peace. They continuously asked for an ideological change especially concerning the Palestinians and even the PLO.[54] This debate, would later, have far-reaching implications for the party in recognising the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians. The perceived threat that the 'Gang of

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51 *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, April 11, 1992.

52 Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

53 Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

54 Interview with Avraham Burg, Jerusalem, February 16, 2000.

Eight' would quit the party played a role in the peace process.[55] This group, as was discussed above, sought to introduce ideological changes in the party platform with respect to the Palestinians. Their request was met only when the leadership feared that this group would quit the party and join Meretz. With Rabin as head of the Labour and this very attractive list, Labour entered the 1992 election.

The 1992 Election

The election in the summer of 1992 was certainly the most important in the history of Israel. For the first time since its electoral defeat in 1977, the Labour Party was able to emerge as a clear winner on a definitive peace platform. Not only did Labour win more seats than Likud, but more importantly Labour had a blocking majority. Labour and parties to its left obtained 61 seats, with Labour alone obtaining 44 seats. As a consequence, Likud had no chance whatsoever to form a government with the support of the right wing and religious parties. More interestingly, Likud actually underwent a decline and only captured 32 seats. Indeed many observers regarded the outcome of the election as another *mahapach*.[56] This section analyses the 1992 election and accounts for Labour's impressive performance.

Interestingly, the election came only a few months after the Likud-led government, under intensive American pressure, agreed to attend the Madrid Peace Conference, which eventually commenced in October 1991. Shamir's approval of the international conference was a marked departure from his previous position. Despite this, he was

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[55] Interview with Avraham Burg, Jerusalem, February 16, 2000.

[56] The first *mahapach* was in 1977 when Labour was defeated for the first time.

adamantly determined not to concede an inch of the Occupied Territories.[57] As a consequence of Shamir's uncompromising position during the conference, the Israeli public was more aware of the issues of peace, territories and security than ever before. For many voters, the territories was a considerable factor in their voting preferences. A survey conducted by Asher Arian showed that 52 percent of the electorate felt the issue of territories would influence their vote (less than a third said this in previous election).[58] Hence, voters' evaluations of the performance of both Likud (identified with no-inch policy) and Labour (associated with 'land for peace' formula) in respect to the prospect for peace, the Intifada, security, and foreign policy could account for the outcome of the election.

Labour adopted a clever campaign strategy. The Labour campaign was centred around one personality, Yitzhak Rabin. Though direct election of the Prime Minister was to be applied from the 1996 election, Rabin campaigned as if the 1992 election was a direct one for the premiership.[59] Labour deliberately attempted to personalise the campaign, as Rabin's personality had a wider appeal than Shamir's. For example, the primary slogan for Labour's campaign was 'Israel was waiting for Rabin'. Thus the emphasis was on Rabin rather than on the party. The aforementioned slogan evoked the once popular Israeli song at the time of 1967 war 'Nasser is waiting for Rabin'.[60] Most of the credits for the stunning victory over the combined Arab armies went to Rabin as chief of staff

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[57] Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

[58] Asher Arian & Michal Shamir, 'Two Reversals: Why 1992 was Not 1977,' in Asher Arian & Michal Shamir (eds.), *The Elections In Israel 1992* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p.24.

[59] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[60] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

and, of course, Moshe Dayan, then Minister of Defence. The slogan helped to remind the electorate that Rabin could be trusted with matters concerning security. In fact, Rabin surrounded himself with ex-generals such as Avigdor Kahalani and Ephraim Sneh to reinforce his image as 'Mr. Security'.[61] This measure placed him, rather than Peres, in an advantageous position to deal successfully with Likud's rhetorical attacks on questions relating to peace and security.

Indeed, for Labour to win the election, the selection of Rabin was a key factor. For the sake of the election, the name of the party became 'The Labour Party Headed by Rabin'. The focus on Rabin actually helped Labour considerably to gain centrist voters, who were not keen on having another right-wing government. Around 100,000 'soft' Likud supporters, who could be attracted to Rabin rather than Peres, were a target for Labour's campaign centrist strategy.[62]

Aware of Rabin's popularity among the electorate, Likud tried, without success, to ruin his image. Rabin was referred to as the worst Prime Minister Israel ever had, a person who was not qualified for high office (referring to his failure to deal with the Intifada), furthermore a man who collapsed under pressure,[63] and a man who favoured a dovish government.[64] Despite these accusations, Rabin remained very popular and his image as

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[61] Interview with Mark Heller, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[62] Neil Lochery, op. cit., p.209.

[63] This story goes back to eve of the Six-Day War, when Rabin was chief of staff. Ezer Weizmann claimed in his memoirs that Rabin had a nervous breakdown because he was not able to stand the pressure. However, Rabin refuted this story in his memoirs, in which he argued he only took a day off to take rest. The truth is Rabin led the army in the war.

[64] Mordechai Nissan, 'The Likud: The Delusion of Power,' in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler (eds.), *Israel at the Polls, 1992* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1995), p. 49.

Mr. Security was undamaged. Indeed, it was recognised that much of his domestic weakness as Prime Minister (1974-77) had a lot to do with the aftermath of 1973 War, which caused infighting and personal intrigue within Labour. Now that the party was united behind him, the image was different. Likud's accusation against him as a man inadequate for high office was, therefore, perceived to be groundless. Though it is true that the Intifada erupted and continued when Rabin was Minister of Defence, the assumption by Moshe Arens (Likud) of the defence portfolio following the break-up of the NUG in 1990 did not change the situation in the Occupied Territories. As a consequence, the emphasis on personality helped Rabin rather than Shamir. Rabin was much more popular within Israel and furthermore, more respected internationally. 80 percent of those who abandoned Likud in the 1992 election to vote for Labour were influenced by the fact that Rabin was the candidate for premiership.[65] Taken together, it was obvious that Shamir was no match to Rabin in status. This indeed proves that internal reforms within Labour eventually paid off. The adoption of primaries for the selection of the candidate for the premiership and the list to the Knesset (which portrayed the party as united and clean) stood in a stark difference to Likud's way of selecting its candidates with its implication of in-fighting within Likud.

In fact, Likud suffered to a considerable extent from the intra-party differences and competition. On February 20, 1992, Yitzhak Shamir defeated both David Levy and Ariel Sharon in the Likud Central Committee in the contest over who would be the candidate for the premiership. Though Levy was placed number four on the list (after Shamir, Arens, and Sharon), his supporters within Likud were relegated to the bottom of

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[65] Arian and Shamir, op. cit., p.45.

the list.[66] Levy's defeat evoked the Sephardi internal issue within Likud. Levy accused that his supporters, who were predominantly from a Sephardi background, were victims of a plot by both Shamir and Sharon driven by anti-Sephardi feelings. The public image of Likud, torn by internal disputes and recriminations among the top leaders, left a negative impact on the party.

Labour was also helped by the lack of a centrist party.[67] In Israeli politics, there had been few centrist parties; that is to say between Labour and Likud in the political spectrum. In this connection, it is important to clarify what the Israeli centre means. In fact, it is difficult to define a centre simply because it has to do with three cross-cutting axes: the territorial one, the economic one, and the religious one. For example, it could be argued that Likud is a centrist party with matters relating to religion, but not with matters pertaining to the Occupied Territories. Following the 1967 War and until 1992, three Israeli parties had attempted to occupy the centre. The first was Dash Party (the Democratic Movement for Change) which was headed by Yigal Yadin.[68] Dash was, in fact, the outgrowth of the protest movements in Israel that came into being following the 1973 War with many defectors from Labour.[69] It contested the 1977 election winning 15 seats, thus contributing to Labour's electoral defeat. This party joined Begin's government but disintegrated and consequently disappeared from Israeli politics. Another centrist party was established by Moshe Dayan in 1981 with the name Telem.

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[66] Daniel J. Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, 'The 1992 Israeli Knesset Elections: Mahapach or a Transfer of Power?' in Daniel Elazar and Shmuel Sandler (eds.), *Israel at the Polls, 1992* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1995), p.20.

[67] Ibid., p.13.

[68] Asher Arian, op. cit., p.101.

[69] Rael Jean Isaac, *Party and Politics in Israel, Three Visions of a Jewish State* (New York; Longman, Inc, 1981), p.123.

Dayan and his associates hoped to play a centrist role in Israeli politics. However, it won only three seats in the 1981 election, thus failing to realise its objectives and as a consequence disappeared. The other party was Ezer Weizmann's Yahad Party (Together), which won three seats in the 1984 election, but shortly afterwards joined Labour. These unsuccessful attempts to establish a centrist party discouraged other politicians from trying a similar move. As a consequence, both Likud and Labour competed to portray an image of being centrist. This clearly worked in Labour's favour in the 1992 election not least due to Rabin's candidacy. This centrist image would have been damaged had Peres, known for his dovish positions, been atop Labour.

Another factor that considerably affected the outcome of the election was the prospect for peace with the Arab countries. During the negotiations following the Madrid conference, no progress was actually achieved. It was clear to everyone that as long as Shamir was the head of the government, the prospects for progress in the Middle East peace process were practically non-existence. Shamir was determined to keep the process going, while simultaneously inundating the Occupied Territories with more settlers and settlements with the tactical aim of complicating the peace process.[70] This policy, as will be seen below, complicated Israel's relations with the United States and, eventually, led to a confrontation between Shamir and President George Bush.

Likud's emphasis on the West Bank and Gaza Strip was to play into the hands of Labour. Their narrow ideological stand with regard to the political future of the Occupied Territories was leading Israel nowhere. Peace would not be achieved and thus

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[70] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

security, which Likud defined as the retention of the territories, would be increasingly threatened. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Israeli public was leaning more and more towards a dovish stand. As a result, Likud's argument that Labour would partition the 'Land of Israel' was indeed not a feasible card to play. Roni Milo, a rising star from Likud argued that 'Behind Rabin is Peres, behind Peres is Beilin, behind Beilin is Sarid (Meretz), behind Sarid is Miari (of the PLP), and behind Miari is Arafat.'[71] Likud's attempt to persuade the public that Rabin would concede territories to the Palestinians did not save them from a crushing defeat.

Labour, on the other hand, attacked and criticised Likud for the lack of progress in the negotiations that followed the Madrid conference. To portray himself as more capable than Shamir, Rabin pledged that he would be able to conclude an agreement with the Palestinians within six months after taking office.[72] Rabin was, of course, aware of the critical importance of security to the Israelis. As a consequence, he understood that peace with security was the only solution to the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict.[73] The continuation of the Intifada associated with a deterioration in security played into the hands of Labour.[74] A number of violent incidents during the campaign, resulting in the death of Jews, helped Labour to accuse Likud of not being tough enough to deter such violence. In his campaign, Rabin's strategy was to give visibility to ex-generals to give the impression that Labour was more capable of dealing with security than Likud. To achieve this aim, a deliberate policy was implemented by Rabin not to give Peres and

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[71] Quoted in Neill Lochery, op. cit., p. 213.

[72] *Ma'ariv*, April 2, 1992.

[73] Interview with Mark Heller, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[74] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem February 7, 2000.

the dovish candidates a prominent role in the campaign. As a result, they maintained a low profile during the campaign. Most of them were sent to talk to the peripheral constituencies and in places where the support for Labour was taken for granted.

Furthermore, Rabin made a distinction between 'political' settlements and 'security' settlements. Naturally, Rabin supported the latter due to their importance in defending the borders of the country, while rejecting the former as an obstacle to peace.[75] Rabin attacked Likud for investing considerable energy on 'political' settlements. Rabin, who had always sought not to antagonise the American administration over the issue of settlements, made it clear that his government would only invest energy within Israel proper. Labour, as will be seen, was able to corner Likud on this matter.

Certainly other factors, in addition to the ones mentioned above, helped bring about the political change. One of these factors was the socio-economic factor, which, again, worked in Labour's favour. The feelings were that Likud mismanaged the economy in a way that led to disappointment. In this regard, Likud was on the defensive. State Comptroller Judge, Miriam Ben-Porat, was very critical of the Likud government's handling of housing issues. In July 1991, she clashed with the Minister of Housing, Ariel Sharon, at a meeting of the Knesset State Control Committee.[76] In that meeting, she let it be known that one firm (which had not even submitted a bid) was paid NIS 8,000 more than originally agreed per prefabricated house. She also criticised the Ministry of Housing over the fact that an engineering firm, which was disqualified by an

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[75] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 30, 2000.

[76] *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, July 13, 1991.

expert committee, was awarded a contract.[77] Such accusations were substantiated by a report issued by the State Comptroller a month before the election. In the report, the government was harshly criticised for 'mismanagement and political opportunism in its effort to absorb the wave of immigrants over the past two years'.[78] In fact, the release of the report was a severe blow to Likud, which was then perceived as not paying attention to the questions of employment and housing. In a sense, Likud was perceived as less accountable to the electorate.[79] The constituency, which was negatively affected by Likud's insistence on spending on settlements, was the development towns. Inhabitants of these towns were usually Likud supporters. Hence, Labour, which promised to invest within Israel, made inroads into one of Likud's traditional strongholds. This factor raises the question of why the majority of Russian immigrants voted for Labour.

The Russian factor played a crucial role in Labour's victory.[80] In previous elections, 1984 and 1988, the near parity between the two big parties actually led to a political deadlock. The formation of a government was difficult and the result was two national unity governments. However, in 1992 election, things changed dramatically. 260,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union were to cast their votes for the first time.[81] Their huge numbers made them a factor that, in theory, would change the balance in the

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[77] *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, July, 13, 1991.

[78] *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, May 9, 1992.

[79] Interview with Michael Eitan, Jerusalem, February 15, 2000.

[80] For an excellent discussion of the role of the Russian immigrants in the 1992 elections, see Clive Jones, *Soviet Jewish Aliyah 1989-1992, Impacts and Implications for Israel and the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), Chapter Seven.

[81] Ibid., p.180.

favour of one of these two big parties. This constituency was a main target of Labour's campaigners.

Rabin and his team devised a strategy that could help defeat Likud in this constituency. According to this strategy, Rabin, throughout the election campaign, kept focusing on the issue of national priorities. In fact, he coined the phrase 're-ordering the national priorities.' The meaning of this phrase was that while Likud was wasting Israel's resources on settlements in the Occupied Territories to realise an ideological dream, a Labour-led government would reverse this policy. In order to drive a wedge between Likud and its supporters, Labour campaigners made it clear that should the Israeli electorate entrust Labour to form the next government, the money invested on 'political' security would be re-channelled to infrastructure, creating jobs, and housing within the green line.[82] This message struck a responsive chord among two important constituencies: the Russian immigrants and the dwellers of development towns, especially when Likud was sharply criticised for mismanagement by the state Comptroller, a non-partisan position.

As a consequence, a majority of Russian immigrants chose to vote for Labour. Their election of Labour should be understood in the context of their suffering from a lack of housing and jobs. However, on the question of conceding territories to the Palestinians, the majority expressed their preference for the retention of land. For instance, in January 1992, around 54 percent of the new immigrants favoured not returning

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[82] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

territories to the Palestinians.[83] But, when compared with the 75 percent who supported the position in April 1991,[84] it showed an increasing number of immigrants were leaning towards the notion of a territorial compromise. In fact these immigrants cast a protest vote against Likud's policies on the above mentioned issues. Rabin's package of peace with security and prosperity convinced a majority to vote for Labour despite their knowledge that Rabin had always favoured peace for land. As Clive Jones argues:

> By linking the investment of financial and political capital in settlement construction to the degradation of the strategic and socio-economic security of the Jewish State, the Labour alignment produced a platform more attuned to the needs of Israelis in general and the Soviet *olim* [immigrants] in particular.[85]

Coincidentally, a majority of Russian immigrants was, indirectly, influenced by the Bush-Baker position regarding a $10 billion loan guarantee that the Israeli government had requested to help absorb the waves of immigrants.

As was discussed earlier, the Bush-Baker administration was determined to seek an even-handed policy in order to help the parties to the conflict find a satisfactory settlement. President Bush frequently stressed that any settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict should be based on trading territory for peace and respecting 'legitimate Palestinian rights'.[86] Bush and Baker regarded the settlements as a considerable obstacle to peace. The issue of settlement became a bone of contention between Shamir and Bush. Differences between them crystallised when Shamir's government requested a

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[83] Aharon Fein, 'Voting Trends of Recent Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union,' in Asher Arian & Michal Shamir (eds.), *The Elections in Israel, 1992* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p.169.

[84] Ibid., p. 169.

[85] Clive Jones, op. cit., p.196.

[86] *The Jerusalem Post*, February 18, 1991.

$10 billion loan guarantee in order to build housing for Russian immigrants. When Bush asked for a freeze on settlement activities as a *quid pro quo* for approving the guarantee, Shamir rejected the American proposal. Shamir went even further when he decided to exert pressure on the American President in America in order to obtain the loan. He urged 'Israel friends' in the Congress to push President Bush to agree. President Bush, who was determined to win this battle, threatened to use the veto and thus the Congress declined. President Bush officially rejected the Israeli request in March 1992, only three months before the Israeli election. James Baker believed that Israel should not be given the loan. In his words: 'we were not going to furnish US tax dollars to pursue a course that ran counter to American policy.'[87] The outcome was that Shamir lost the battle and as a result, his relations with the Bush administration deteriorated.

The American position helped Rabin to portray Shamir's intransigence as the reason for deteriorating Israeli-American relations. On different occasions, Rabin argued that the confrontation could have been avoided. Rabin held Shamir responsible for the crisis with the Bush administration. The crisis markedly strengthened Rabin's slogan of re-ordering national priorities. Shamir's claims that the United States was trying to compel Israel to withdraw to the 1967 border and that it ceased be an 'honest broker' did not help him to mobilise the masses behind him.[88]. Surveys showed that the majority believed that Shamir should have acquiesced to the American request. In a survey conducted in January 1992, 56 percent of the immigrants thought that the Israeli

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[87] James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), p.556.

[88] Barry Rubin, 'US-Israel Relations and Israel's 1992 Elections,' in Asher Arian and Michal Shamir (eds.), *The Elections in Israel, 1992* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 200.

government should agree to the American demands in order to receive the loan. Among those who support territorial compromise, 84 percent were, in fact, accepting the American conditions whereas among those who opposed territorial compromise, only 42 percent were willing to respond positively to the American terms.[89] The position of the Russian immigrants was a very complicated one, but many among those opposed to territorial compromise changed their preferences because of the American linkage.

However, the American rejection of Shamir's request should not be interpreted as interference in the Israeli election. The whole issue of difficulties in absorbing immigrants and the Israeli request for the loan coincided with the 1992 general election. Despite of Baker's preference for Rabin over Shamir, he himself ruled out any design to interfere in the Israeli election. He wrote in his memoirs that:

> Most of my Middle East specialists believed that the peace process would always be in some peril so long as the Shamir government remained in power...but it was not a conscious policy on our part to exploit the issue of guarantee/settlement in order to influence Israeli elections.[90]

The Bush administration was certainly concerned about the peace process. Giving Israel the guarantee without any progress in the peace process could have hurt the image of the United States, in the Arab world, as an 'honest broker' and might have put an end to the peace process.[91] Hence, capitulating to Shamir's demands would have antagonised the Arabs and would have destroyed the peace process.

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[89] Aharon Fein, op. cit., p.170.

[90] James Baker, op. cit., pp.555-56.

[91] Interestingly, the Madrid Conference came several months after an American-led coalition harshly destroyed Iraqi civilian and military infrastructures. Many people in the Arab world were convinced that the United States sought not only to liberate Kuwait from Saddam's occupation but also to destroy the Iraqi army to save Israel from an inevitable confrontation with Iraq, in which an Israeli defeat was a real possibility.

Successfully exploiting the crisis that Shamir initiated with the Bush administration, Labour clarified to the public that investing in settlements and achieving peace, security, prosperity, and good relations with the United States were incompatible. This problem led many, particularly floating voters, to grapple with the question whether Labour under the pragmatic leadership of Rabin or Likud under the ideological leadership of Shamir could deliver.

Another factor that strengthened the hand of Labour was the constitutional change that stipulated 1.5 percent as the electoral threshold. This change raised the number of votes a list needed from around 24,000 votes in the 1988 election to around 40,000 votes in the 1992 election. Though the Labour block gained fewer votes than the Likud block, the Labour block had the blocking majority of 61 seats. Efraim Inbar argued that Labour's victory was a technical one and was only due to the fragmentation of the Likud block as opposed to the unity of the Labour block.[92] As mentioned earlier, three leftist parties, Mapam, Shinui, and Ratz, merged into Meretz in order to pass the threshold and this strategy paid off. On the contrary, as a result of the fragmentation of the right, many lists contested the election, just failing to pass the electoral threshold (Tehiya was an example). Hence, the votes they received were wasted. Thus Labour was able to gain a clear victory with 44 seats. In second place was Likud with 32 seats. Most importantly though, Rabin felt that he rather than the party had won the election. He constructed a working coalition speedily and with few problems.

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[92] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

The Formation of the Government

The result of the election underlined only one fact: no party but Labour could form a government. The reasons for this, as mentioned earlier, were that Labour and parties to its left held a blocking majority. Labour gained 44 seats, Meretz gained 12 seats, and the Arab parties gained 5 seats. Together they had 61 seats, just enough to prevent the other block from forming a government. This factor is very important because from the mid 1980s onward, it was not only sufficient for a party to win the highest number of seats in order to form a government, but more importantly to have a blocking majority. In the case of the 1992 election, if the Likud block had gained two more seats, Likud would have formed a government despite the fact it received 12 seats less than Labour.

However, due to a cultural taboo (since the establishment of the state, no government ever has appointed an Arab-Israeli as a minister or has included the Arab parties in the governmental coalition)[93], Rabin could not form his government with the participation of the Arab parties. On this point, both Likud and Labour agreed: a government should enjoy a Jewish majority, not just any majority. Rabin needed the Arab parties only to block any possibility for Likud to put together a government.[94] Indeed, three major contradicting principles have been behind Israel's formal policy *vis-à-vis* its Palestinian Arab citizens. These are the democratic principle, the Jewish-Zionist principle, and the security concerns.[95] The first feature entails equality and integration. However, the

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[93] For the first time in Israel's history, one Israeli Arab, Salih Tarif, was appointed as a minister without portfolio in Ariel Sharon's government in February 2001.

[94] Interview with Aharon Kleiman, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

[95] Majid al-Haj, 'The Political Behaviour of the Arabs in Israel in the 1992 Elections: Integration versus segregation,' in Asher Arian & Michal Shamir (eds.), *The Elections in Israel 1992* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995), p.145.

second and third factors in many ways contradict the first. In fact, the security concerns, have always had the upper hand in deciding Israel's policy towards its Palestinian minority. In addition to security concerns, what prompted Rabin to exclude the Arab parties from his government was that any strategic decision, such as peace that entails conceding parts or all of the West Bank, should enjoy the support of a Jewish majority.[96] The Israeli right was furious that the Arabs helped Rabin in establishing a blocking majority. Sharon expressed this sentiment in an article published by *Yediot Aharonot* on July 3, 1992, in which he argued that:

> The genuine political upheaval in the State of Israel did not occur in 1977 but in 1992, since the rise of the Likud just replaced one Jewish political block by another. In 1992 elections a completely different thing took place and it was worrisome and scary: for the first time in the history of the state [Israel], the Arab minority—in particular the anti-Zionist part amongst it—has determined who will be in power in the state of Israel and who will shape its future.[97]

As a consequence, the Arab parties understood that Rabin expected their support in the Knesset in return for meeting some of their demands.[98] Because of the cultural taboo, Rabin was left without any option but to court some of the right and religious parties to participate and thus 'legitimise' his regime. However, Rabin sought coalition partners to the right of Labour in order to balance the dovish majority in his government, which would have been composed of the Peres' camp and Meretz. Consequently he invited Shas (6 seats), the NRP (6 seats), Yahadut Ha Torah (4 seats) and Tzomet (8 seats) for negotiations. Though all of them expressed their desire to take part in the government, there were disagreements among the parties, especially Tzomet and the NRP on the one

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[96] It is interesting to mention that when Netanyahu defeated Peres in the 1996 election by a margin of less than one percent, Netanyahu and his supporters widely publicised the fact the Netanyahu enjoyed a Jewish majority of eleven percent.

[97] Quoted in Majid al-Haj, op. cit., p.155.

[98] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000.

hand and Meretz on the other hand over three issues: settlements, religion, and distribution of portfolios.[99] Rafael Eitan of Tzomet sought the education portfolio, which had been already given to Shulamit Aloni of Meretz (known for her anti-religious stance). The allocation of the education portfolio to Aloni further angered the NRP and Yahadut Ha Torah who were completely provoked by this appointment. As a consequence, negotiations became very difficult and were aggravated by the fact that Rabin appointed Haim Ramon to run coalition negotiations. The appointment of Ramon, known for his dovishness and anti-clerical ideas, did not help form a wide coalition with religious and right parties.

Among the parties invited to negotiate a coalition, Shas was the most acceptable to Labour due to, in comparison to other parties, its relatively moderate views on the peace process and due to the fact that Haim Ramon enjoyed good relations with its leader Aryeh Deri. Shas was more interested in the portfolio of the Interior Ministry and deputy post of Minister of Education in order to channel funds for its school system and to meet the demands of its Sephardi community. The party's positions with regard to the future of the Occupied Territories was closer to that of Labour's than that of Likud's. Its mentor, Rabbi Yosef Ovadia, advocated a biblical concept of *pikuh nefsh,* which gives priority to saving Jewish lives. He repeatedly stressed that giving up territories in order to avert a war (in which Jewish lives would be lost) was permissible.[100] His support of territorial concessions, however, derived not from lack of desire or belief in the integrity of *Eretz Yisrael*, but from his fears over the possible loss of Jewish lives.

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[99] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[100] Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky, *Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), p.16.

Eventually, Shas joined Rabin's government (which was formed without the participation of other religious or right wing parties).

Rabin had to appoint Shimon Peres as a Minister of Foreign Affairs due to the later's intra-party strength. The majority of Labour members in the Knesset belonged to Peres camp. Although Rabin sought to balance hawks and doves, three ministers from Meretz joined the government and made Rabin's government the most dovish in the history of Israel. This factor is very important in explaining Israel's movement to a peace with both the PLO and subsequently with Jordan.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the crucial importance of intra-party developments within the Labour Party and their bearing on the making of Israel's foreign policy. The main argument advanced in this chapter is that the electoral victory of Labour in the 1992 general elections and subsequent formation of the most dovish government ever in Israel's short history in part provided the sufficient conditions for the ruling coalition to respond positively to the developments in the regional and international environments. The study argued that the electoral change in 1992 came *partly* as a result of the dynamics of intra-party developments within Labour.

During the Labour Movement's dominance in Israeli politics up to its first electoral defeat in 1977, the selection of the candidates' list to the Knesset was conducted through what might be termed as an oligarchic process. A committee appointed by the top leaders would choose the list in a manner compatible with the interests of top leaders thus creating a patron-client relationship. Two outcomes were the result: first the

Labour Party gradually stopped being representative or responsive to the electorate. The second was that the clients did not have a marked say on policy formulation. The eventual outcome of this oligarchic process contributed, *inter alia*, to the downfall of the party in 1977. In fact, prior to the party's electoral failure, no serious attempts to introduce reforms were made because Labour had won every time through what Israelis called the *mahapach*.

However, with the consecutive defeats of Labour in the post-1977 election, pressures for introducing democratic reforms mounted from within the party. Many came to the conclusion that Labour would simply never win elections without adopting reforms. The impetus for reform, in fact, was led by the young generation, who happened to be dovish, such as Uzi Bar'am, who ran for, and actually won, the election for the General-Secretary of the Party in 1984 on the platform of democratic reform within the party.

A number of reforms were introduced before the 1988 election, but nevertheless, Labour was defeated. Following the 'dirty exercise'[101] of April 1990, Shimon Peres was discredited as chairman of the party. Hence, an increasing number of Labourites called for adopting primaries in order to choose the candidate for the premiership and the list of candidates for the Knesset. The idea of introducing primaries was given momentum when many were convinced that this step would help rehabilitate the party and would produce a much more attractive, representative, and responsive list. The general feeling was that in order for Labour to regain power, radical reforms had to be taken.

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[101] 'Dirty exercise' was a term coined by Yitzhak Rabin, in which he criticised Peres for his attempt in March and April 1990 to bring the NUG down and form a government under his leadership.

A key to understanding why Labour won in 1992 was the replacement of Peres by the more popular Rabin. Interestingly, Likud wished that Peres had won over Rabin because Shamir would have then defeated him.[102] However, as has been demonstrated in this chapter, even supporters of Peres switched their votes to Rabin on this occasion. This argument is substantiated by the fact that those who voted for Rabin, to help the party regain power, voted for Peres' camp in selecting the list.[103] Peres did emerge victorious in the list, which was why Rabin had little choice but to appoint him Foreign Minister.

Internal reforms led to two developments within Labour that had a far-reaching implication on the peace process. The first development was that without primaries, Rabin's chance to unseat Peres would have been slim. Rabin had failed in 15 years to change the balance of power within the party in his favour and he remained almost an outsider to the apparatuses of the party. Rabin's assumption of the party leadership helped make the inroads necessary in Likud's constituencies. The second development was that the younger generation, which gained pre-eminence, had a clear dovish ideology and adopted a position of compromise towards the Palestinians and the PLO. For example, Avraham Burg, who advocated negotiations with the PLO, was elected number three on the list only after Rabin and Peres. Their pre-eminence, in fact, reflected the fact that the wider public was becoming more dovish as a result of the Intifada. Without primaries, the ascendance of a dovish youth would have been unlikely to materialise. This change is crucial in understanding the later transformation of the

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[102] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 9, 2000.

[103] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem 31, 2000.

party *vis-à-vis* the PLO. These influential dovish people, who later occupied some important portfolios or governmental positions, were helped by Meretz to give Rabin's government the dovish posture.

As was demonstrated in the chapter, a combination of interrelated factors contributed to Labour's victory. Factors, such as the peace process, security, the socio-economic situation in Israel, and the American proposal of conditioning a loan guarantee to a freeze on settlement were important. However, those who helped Labour to victory knew that Labour would be more compromising than Likud in negotiations with the Arabs.

However, other factors were important in making the Labour government capable of deciding on peace. Labour, according to Yossi Beilin, had missed many opportunities for achieving peace prior to 1977 by being torn by internal differences that made a decision on peace a prescription for the disintegration of the party. Therefore, unity of purpose and consensus over the desire to achieve peace, was essential for Labour to win its way back to government and to rule efficiently. The next chapter will show how important personalities were to be in achieving this since the rapprochement between the life-long rivals, Peres and Rabin, was a key to this process.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE POLITICS OF PERSONALITY

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the internal reforms, which took place within the Labour Party, actually helped the party to victory in the 1992 election. Labour's success, it was demonstrated, was of crucial significance in facilitating Israel's road to peace. It was also argued that Labour's victory rested primarily on that fact that it was Rabin who had been the candidate for premiership. After successfully concluding the Oslo Accord on September 13, 1993, it was Rabin—with his reputation as 'Mr. Security' who was able to sell the Oslo Accord to the Israeli public. As a consequence of all of these factors it is obvious that Rabin's stance and his thinking were key to understanding Israel's historic decision to sign the Oslo Accord and consequently to secure a peace treaty with Jordan. In addition, the transformation of Rabin's relationship with Peres to a more co-operative one during Rabin's second government (1992-95) had helped the Labour-led government to decide on peace.

This chapter is made up of five sections. The first part introduces the analytical concepts that will be utilised in this chapter. A second focuses on what we may describe as Rabin's belief system. Rabin's understanding of modern Jewish history enhanced a sense of insecurity and as a consequence he placed national security as the highest priority and duty for Israel. A third section explores how he perceived the immediate regional environment, that being the Middle East in which he perceived the Arab-Israeli conflict. A fourth section analyses how the perennial rivalry and lack of mutual trust between Rabin and Peres actually hindered Israel's road to peace during Rabin's first tenure (1974-77) but also during the years of the NUG (1984-90). As the chapter

demonstrates the rapprochement between them was a necessary precondition for the move towards peace. A final section examines the causes of changes that Rabin had experienced particularly the impact of the Intifada on his mind-set. Indeed, as we shall see this was an especially formative period.

Concepts to be Utilised

The argument that is therefore advanced in this chapter is that Rabin's approach to peacemaking was formed by two key factors: the Jewish prism, through which he perceived the world and what might be termed his personal traits such as lack of trust in others, and suspicion.

As was discussed in Chapter One, the traditional approach to the study of foreign policy came under criticism because it assumes that foreign policy is the product of rational behaviour. Therefore, the recognition of 'irrationality' in foreign policy has led to a growing interest in the role of psychological factors.[1] It may seem unusual or perhaps even unwarranted to attribute so much influence to one man's personality, but where there are a few people directly and constantly involved in a process, it is surely inevitable that their own personal traits will come to bear on the outcome. There are some scholars who have argued, to the author's mind convincingly, that such traits play a vital role in the making of any foreign policy decision. For example, Michael J. Shapiro and G. Mathew Bonham stress that 'beliefs of foreign policy decision-makers are central to the study of decision outputs and probably account for more of the

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[1] Daniel J. Levinson, 'Authoritarian personality and foreign policy,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.1, no.1 (1957), p.36.

variance than any other single factor.'[2] Other scholars contest the argument about the significance of these psychological factors. For example, Herbert Kelman argues that though the characteristics and beliefs of decision-makers do matter they are probably of minor importance.[3] In Israel's case, however, the role of personality in the making of Israel's foreign policy does matter. Its importance stems from the fact that foreign policy decision-making in Israel is what we may describe as highly personalised. The impact of Rabin's personal traits on his attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, which were enhanced by the Jewish prism, were considerable.

Michael Brecher believes that the idea of 'Jewishness' is to be the dominant attitudinal prism in the foreign policy decision-making process in Israel. 'Jewishness' is simply a concept that refers to the impact of factors such as historic experience, national character, and cultural heritage on Israeli leaders' perceptions of the world. This 'Jewishness' pervades 'thought, feeling, belief, and behaviour in the political realm.'[4] In other words, decision-makers see reality through their perception of Jewish history. This predisposes them to act in a particular way. Decision-makers' choices are therefore directly guided by their views, and influenced by the resulting psychological environment. These latter views will of course include their beliefs about the other actors involved in the decision-making process as well as their opinions and perceptions of the outside world. Brecher contends that decision-makers in foreign policy in fact operate

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[2] Quoted in Lloyd Jensen, *Explaining Foreign Policy* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1982), p.13.

[3] Herbert G. Kelman, 'The Role of the Individual in International Relations,' *Journal of International Affairs*, vol.24, no.1 (1970), p.7.

[4] Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.229.

> Within a context of psychological predispositions. These comprise (a) societal factors, such as ideology and tradition, which derive from the cumulative historical legacy; and (b) personality factors—the idiosyncratic qualities of decision-makers—that is, those aspects of elite attitudes which are not generated by their role occupancy.[5]

Therefore, given that Israel was born out of war and its survival as an independent state was perceived by its leaders to be under constant threat, the Jewish prism is of great help in understanding many of Rabin's opinions and policies.

Rabin's Belief System

The need to examine Rabin's belief system when explaining Israel's road to peace with Jordan and the Palestinians derives from the fact that decision-makers in general act in response to their subjective *perception* of reality and not to reality itself.[6] The emphasis on Rabin rather than other decision-makers within the Labour-led government (1992-1996) is justified by the fact that Rabin rather than Peres won the general elections. Rabin was convinced that Labour would not have won had he not been the candidate for the premiership and as a result he felt that he was strong enough to assert his authority over his colleagues within the party. There was a shift in the way Rabin dealt with his colleagues after his electoral victory in 1992 when he insisted on his exclusive right to appoint ministers. He was determined to be the undisputed leader. This was in sharp contrast to his first term as Prime Minister, when he did not have great say in the appointment of his ministers. In his victory speech, he declared: 'I will lead the

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[5] Ibid, p.11.

[6] Michael Brecher et al, 'A Framework for Research on Foreign Policy Behavior,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.13, no.1 (1969), p.86.

coalition negotiations...And I will appoint the cabinet ministers.'[7] Another reason for the emphasis on Rabin is that many Israelis consider him as the only one who would have been able to take such a bold step and survive politically. As Dan Schueftan argues that

> To understand this historic decision [signing the Oslo Accord and the peace treaty with Jordan] one should only focus on one person; that is Rabin. Were it not for Yitzhak Rabin, I doubt if this change would have happened.[8]

It is argued in this chapter that Jewishness, a military career, and the Arab-Israeli conflict were the main contributing factors to Rabin's psychological makeup and his attitudinal prism. These elements in fact enhanced a sense of insecurity and reinforced Rabin's perception of power, especially military power as a crucial determinant in the political equation. This as we shall see becomes important for his perception of the conflict with the Arab World. Rabin was an ardent Zionist, a believer in the 'Jews' right' to have a state of their own in Palestine. Rabin placed himself in this tradition, and his actions must be understood as inspired by his Jewish and Zionist background.

Two factors in effect led to the emergence of Zionism as a political movement with the objective of setting up a state for the Jews somewhere in the world (many places were considered before Palestine was settled on). The first one was the fact that Jews were dispersed in many countries as minorities. Zionists believed, and indeed still do believe, that a state would put an end to this fragmentation of the Jewish people, and would make them less dependent on others. The second factor was the failure of Jews' endeavours to

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[7] Quoted in David Horovitz (ed.), *Yitzhak Rabin, Soldier of Peace* (London: Peter Halban Publishers Ltd, 1996), p.111.

[8] Interview with Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

become assimilated into European societies. They lived as a threatened, often mistreated, and unwanted minority. This was compounded by the intensification of anti-Semitism and the spread of nationalism in Europe throughout the nineteenth century. The need for a state increased as a result of their persecution in Europe, which culminated in the Holocaust during the Second World War. Rabin, as will be shown, gradually moved into alignment with the Ben-Gurion camp, which believed that a state must be established.[9] A state for Jews, the Zionists thought, would provide them with something that they had sought for so many centuries, that being security. Somewhat ironically, the establishment of this state, which was meant to provide a peaceful safe-haven for Jews, of course actually resulted in a continuous state of war with the Arab World. The Jewish sense of insecurity was thereby reinforced following the establishment of the Jewish State rather than being assuaged.[10]

This feeling of insecurity was to haunt Yitzhak Rabin throughout his career and was amplified by his sense of Jewish history.[11] This sense of insecurity had its origins in a general Jewish inclination to see themselves as a people living in isolation. The root of this idea lies in the experiences of displacement and enslavement which the Jews suffered periodically throughout biblical times, and perhaps even more importantly, in the religious interpretation these afflictions were given by the Rabbis. A biblical verse depicts Israel as 'a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the

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[9] Robert Slater, *Rabin of Israel: A Biography* (Great Britain: Robson Books Ltd, 1993), p.53

[10] Interview with Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

[11] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

nations.'[12] Ezer Weizmann regarded this sense of insecurity and isolation as part of Jewish heritage and connected it to the absence of peace. In an interview with *Spectrum*, a Labour Party monthly published in English, he refers to the fears as part of a 'ghetto mentality'.[13] This mentality, Weizmann described as 'a mentality that perceives everyone on the outside as an enemy.'[14] Yitzhak Rabin also saw the world through this prism, and through it had interpreted the events taking place in the international arena. In 1975, for example, Rabin reacted to the United Nations resolution equating Zionism with racism by saying: 'the whole world is against us—when was this not so.'[15]

Rabin also had the characteristic suspicion of the non-Jewish world (*goyim*)[16] which stemmed from a deep-rooted belief (among Israeli Jews) that the world is in fact divided between Jew and Gentile. Michael Brecher has depicted this attitude as a 'two-camp' thesis.[17] This thesis assumes that the gentile world is endurably hostile to the Jews. For example, in 1988, the Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir commented when an international tribunal ruled in favour of Egypt on the issue of Taba saying: that this was yet more evidence that the world was against the Jews. Rabin himself displayed a similar attitude when he commented on the international criticism of Israel' harsh measures against the Intifada in February 1988 by saying: 'beating Jews is unimportant; but when a Jew is

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12 Quoted in Efraim Inbar 'Jews, Jewishness and Israel's Foreign Policy,' *Jewish Political Studies Review*, vol.2, no.3-4 (Fall 1990), p.174.

13 *Spectrum*, June 1988, p.10.

14 Ibid., p.10.

15 Efraim Inbar, *Rabin and Israel's National Security* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.9.

16 Ibid., p.9.

17 Michael Brecher 1972, op. cit., p.276.

beating—this is news.'[18] As we shall see below, this chronic insecurity had an impact on his analysis of, and approach to, the immediate issues at hand.

Rabin's Perception of the Middle East

Efraim Inbar argues that the key to understanding Rabin's approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict is the concept of 'national security' in the Jewish State.[19] Early in his life, Rabin realised that the security of Jews and consequently that of Israel was indeed what was at stake. He had lived through the violent disputes with the Palestinians in the pre-state era which had been especially belligerent in the 1940s.[20] This experience had re-enforced his Jewish prism and his prejudice of the Jews' inherent vulnerability, and had led him to place national security as the top political priority to which Israeli governments must subordinate anything else. Efraim Inbar's argument corroborates the idea outlined earlier on, namely that Rabin's military background,[21] and his view of both Jewish history and the conflict with the Arabs made him see relations with them through 'realpolitik lenses'.[22] He believed in the indispensability of power and the utility of force in Jews' relations with the Arabs.

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[18] Quoted in Inbar, op. cit., p.9.

[19] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[20] Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), Chapter One.

[21] Rabin had started his military career the Palmah (striking force) which was established in 1941. He served as the commander of the Harel Brigade on the Jerusalem front during the 1948 War, as Head of the Northern Command in 1956-59, Head of Operations Branch of General Headquarter in 1959-63, Deputy Chief of Staff in 1963, and Chief of Staff from 1964-68.

[22] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

Rabin's emphasis on security and power appears to be wholly consistent with a particular version of Realist school of thought in International Relations. Certain parts in Realism assume that a state pursues its own national interests through power politics. Hans Morgenthau even argues that power is an end in itself.[23] Rabin was therefore a realist in at least two senses. First, he had no doubt that Israel's physical survival, as a viable nation-state, was what was at stake. Second, he believed that military power was the key to the survival of Israel. Yet, as we have established, ideology in the form of Jewishness was also a powerful influence.

Rabin's assumptions on security and power were given expression in the 'Activist' school within Mapai, a party associated with Ben-Gurion (see Chapter Two). This school of thought assumed that a demonstration of strength is a necessary condition to deter the Arabs from toying with the idea of destroying Israel and in order to convince the Arabs that nothing could be achieved except through negotiations. It is ironic, however, that the advocates of this school have turned down many proposals for a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, as new historians such as Avi Shlaim have demonstrated.[24]

Though Rabin never had been an official member of Ben-Gurion's 'Activist' group, he firmly believed in the rationale behind their formulations. Nonetheless, unlike the activists who sought to gain more territories by following an activist approach, he hoped, rather, that peace and security would be its dividend. He insisted that the best way to

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[23] Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace*, fifth edition (New York: Knopf, 1973).

[24] For more details see Avi Shlaim, 'Husni Za'im and the Plan to Resettle the Palestinian Refugees in Syria,' *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol.XV, no.4 (Summer 1986), pp.67-80.

promote security was peace with the Arab states.[25] Therefore, it was not surprising that he concluded his memoirs with the following statement:

> I must say that as a man who led his country's struggle both on the battlefield and in political negotiations, who has been privileged to amass a unique combination of experience as a soldier, a diplomat and a head of government, there is no doubt whatsoever in my mind that the risks of peace are preferable by far to the grim certainties that await every nation in war.[26]

Despite the espousal of a peaceful way as the only good way forward—as expressed above—Rabin was in fact perceived as a hawk by the Israeli public. In his treatment of Labour's position on national security, Efraim Inbar made a distinction between Labour's elites by placing them along a dovish-hawkish continuum. He used several variables to make such a classification. These were the level of perception of threat, attitude towards the use of force, and position on the Palestinian problem.[27] According to these criteria, a Labourite can be hawk, dove, or *yonetz*. A hawk would have perceived a great threat, would be sceptical about the possibility of achieving peace with the adversaries, and as a consequence would prefer a long-term interim agreement in order to arrive at a comprehensive settlement. Whereas a dove, by contrast, would perceive little threat, and believe that peace is possible, and have a greater sense of urgency.

However, all Labourites agreed on one issue, that is territorial compromise is possible in order to achieve peace. The normative concern for this position, as discussed in Chapter

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[25] Interview with Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

[26] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.264.

[27] Efraim Inbar, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics, Labor Party Position on National Security* (USA: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc, 1991).

Two, was demographics, while the qualitative concerns were the desire to preserve Israel as a Jewish and a democratic state.

Despite the fact that Rabin had never identified himself formally with the hawkish camp within Labour, he was, nevertheless by all yardsticks, a hawk. He saw the threat as remaining high even after the conclusion of a peace treaty with Egypt, the most powerful front-line Arab state. The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty of 1979 relieved Israel from serious and genuine security threats. Rabin himself acknowledged the advantages of the peace with Egypt when he argued that cuts in defence budget were only possible after the peace treaty with Egypt.[28] Besides, unlike Peres, Rabin felt no need to rush towards a settlement for peace. He believed that Israel should wait until the Arabs reconciled themselves to conditions favourable to Israel. He never shared the doves' argument that if progress were not made, a war would be inevitable.[29]

Like many Israeli leaders, Rabin perceived the Palestinian problem within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict; that is to say as inter-state conflict. To Rabin, the question of war or peace was one to be settled with the Arab states and not with the Palestinians.[30] Because of his state-centric view of the Arab-Israeli conflict, he had never attached much importance to the Palestinians or the PLO. Hence his rejection of the PLO as a potential partner for peace. On many occasions, he had expressed his refusal to deal or negotiate with them. To him, the PLO was not qualified to be a partner because he

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28 Efraim Inbar, op. cit., p.43.

29 Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

30 Ibid., p.23.

viewed it as a 'terrorist' organisation, aimed at destroying Israel.[31] During his first visit to the United States during the presidency of Jimmy Carter in March 1977, at a working dinner at the White House, Rabin dismissed any opportunity to embark on negotiations with the PLO. In his words 'what basis is there for negotiations with the PLO, whose avowed *raison d'être* is to destroy Israel and replace her with a Palestinian state?'[32] Like all of his Labour colleagues, his opposition to dealing with the PLO was a fundamental strategy rather than a tactical manoeuvre. In fact, they regarded Jordan as the legitimate partner and so there was no need to deal with the PLO.[33] In March 1988, Rabin affirmed this point when he declared

> I am opposed to a Palestinian PLO state between Israel and Jordan. Since I am totally opposed to this, I am also totally opposed to negotiations with the PLO...At the same time, [I support] a readiness to return –within the framework of peace—the densely populated Palestinian areas to a foreign sovereignty, to Jordan.[34]

Another reason for Rabin's and indeed Labour's rejection of negotiations with the PLO was the fear that such a move would eventually lead to the creation of a Palestinian state between Jordan and Israel. To Rabin and a majority within Labour, this would be the worst scenario imaginable. Such possibility, they believed, was tantamount to political suicide on the part of Israel: a third state between Israel and Jordan would not be a solution to the conflict, but it would be rather the focus of hostility and hatred towards Israel. In 1988, Rabin described such a state as a cancer in the heart of the Middle East.[35] There were fears that such a state—given the fact that around 20 percent of

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[31] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.231.

[32] Ibid., p.231.

[33] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, February 8, 2000.

[34] Quoted in Robert Slater, op. cit., p.342.

[35] *Ma'raiv*, October 10, 1988.

Israelis were Arab Palestinians—would be irredentist. On this point, even his arch-rival, Shimon Peres who was regarded as a dove, rejected the PLO as a partner lest this should lead to a Palestinian state. Peres, in his memoirs gave several reasons for rejecting the Palestinian State led by the PLO. He contends that such a state 'would split western Palestine down the middle, leaving Israel with an untenable and indefensible narrow waist.'[36] Another reason was that

> A Palestinian state, though demilitarised at first, would over time invariably strive to build up a military strength of its own, and the international community, depending upon massive second and Third world support at the UN, would do nothing to stop it...it would pose a constant threat to our security and to the peace and stability of the region.[37]

He also believed that a Palestinian state under the PLO would be ideologically committed to the destruction of Israel.[38] It is easy to see how Rabin, like most of Labour's members, actually preferred Jordan as a partner. This remained his position right up until 1993 when he endorsed Peres and Beilin's plan for peace with the PLO (the reasons for the later defection from the Jordanian option are discussed further on in this chapter). Yet as was shown in Chapter Three, the Jordanian option constituted the cornerstone of Labour's proposed settlement of the conflict, consisting of the concept of a territorial compromise where the West Bank would be partitioned between Jordan and Israel. This policy also stemmed from the fact that Labour's elite on the whole preferred to deal with King Hussein of Jordan as the Palestinian representative rather than Yasser Arafat of the PLO. Unlike Arafat, Hussein was perceived as a moderate leader who

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36 Shimon Peres, *Battling for Peace, Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1995), p.301.

37 Ibid., pp.301-2.

38 Ibid., p.302.

could be trusted. There were good reasons for this, Arafat was perceived as pro-Soviet whereas Hussein was perceived as more pro-western.[39]

The realisation of the Jordanian option would have relieved Israel of the demographic threat that Palestinians in the Occupied Territories potentially posed. This was in fact Labour's argument and rationale for adopting the Jordanian option. Rabin declared in 1988 that it was only because of the demographic problem that he opposed the idea of a Greater Israel. Besides, as we saw in Chapter Two, the implementation of the Jordanian option would keep Israel as both Jewish and democratic.

Upon his assumption of the premiership in 1974, Rabin had envisioned a territorial compromise with Jordan along the lines of the Allon Plan of 1967. In brief, this plan suggested giving up densely populated areas to Jordan and the retaining of strategic areas vital for the security of Israel. However, the Jordanian option was a non-starter.[40] King Hussein, in his clandestine meetings with the Israeli leaders, rejected the Allon Plan and insisted on the return of all the Occupied Territories including East Jerusalem as a *quid pro quo* for a peace agreement.

As mentioned, Rabin's sense of urgency was at this point what may be termed low. He believed that the political status quo was not threatening Israel's security. He perceived the regional environment in the 1980s as a benign one.[41] There were no serious threats to the security of Israel. The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty had neutralised Egypt and

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[39] Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

[40] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[41] *Ha'aretz*, March 8, 1990.

relieved Israel, in case of war, of another front. In addition, Iraq—a distant, but ever present threat—was bogged down in a bloody war with Iran. The First Gulf War (1980-88) diverted the attention and resources of the Arab states, weakened their military options, and more importantly, diminished the prospect for any revival of the eastern front, at least for the foreseeable future.

As a consequence, Rabin believed that time was in Israel's favour. Joseph Alpher argues that playing for time was a key component of Rabin's strategy *vis-à-vis* the Arab-Israeli conflict.[42] The belief that time was on their side, and that delaying tactics promised the best outcome for the least risk or cost, had been an intrinsic part of the mainstream Zionist approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict since the establishment of the state. This tactic was best exemplified by Ben-Gurion's policies in the 1950s. For Rabin as well, playing for time was a constant characteristic of his approach in dealing with the Arab world. Avi Shlaim makes a similar point when he argues that Rabin, in his first tenure as Prime Minister (1974-77), had sought to gain time.[43] His strategy, in Shlaim words was 'to rebuild the iron wall of Jewish military strength to such a point that concessions could not be conceivably interpreted as a sign of weakness.'[44] Rabin's objectives were how to rebuild Israeli morale and the economy in the post-1973 War era without alienating the United States and without meeting the demands of the Arabs. Immediately after the 1973 War, the Arabs felt their power to have been augmented; perceiving that they had delivered a bloody nose to Israel in the war, and that the world

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[42] Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

[43] Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World* (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2000), p.327.

[44] Ibid., p.351.

had now become dependent on their source of oil. Indeed, the energy crisis that had been caused by the war had increased the international political importance of the Arabs. Rabin understood these two new developments and decided that Israel should not concede while it was perceived to be weak.[45] On many occasions he had attached great importance to the necessity for Israel to be perceived as a strong player. In February 1976, he declared:

> Our future power will determine the chances for peace in our region. Weakness is not a recipe for negotiation. If our neighbours come to realize that Israel is not weak, they will eventually see the rationale for mutual compromise, reconciliation and peace.[46]

Furthermore Rabin, and other hawks within Labour, thought that Israel should delay any deal with the Arabs until the Arabs reconciled themselves to the right of Israel to actually exist. To him, time was needed to allow the Arabs to change their positions with regard to Israel. Besides, time was considered a significant factor to test the authenticity of the Arabs' moderation.

As demonstrated in the previous section, Rabin's Jewish prism enforced his realpolitik approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Equally important to mention is that this approach was re-enforced by personal traits of Rabin, such as suspicion and the tendency not to trust others. The following section outlines these personal traits in greater depth and looks at how such traits marred his relationship with Shimon Peres and eventually hindered the peace process.

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[45] Ibid., pp.327-8.

[46] Quoted in Efraim Inbar, op. cit., p.15.

The Rivalry with Peres

As previously pointed out, scholars, such as Michael Brecher in his study of Israel's foreign policy system, stress the significance of personality traits of the decision-makers on issues relating to foreign policy.[47] Brecher analyses the personality traits of the main decision-makers in Israel in the first two decades of its establishment and claims that the most striking dichotomy was between decisiveness and hesitancy. He concluded that David Ben-Gurion was decisive and Moshe Sharett was hesitant.[48] In this section, it is posited that Rabin's suspicious nature and his mistrust of Shimon Peres at first hindered the peace process. It is argued as well that after the 1992 elections, co-operation and a working partnership developed between Rabin and Peres, which in fact helped the Labour-led government conclude the Oslo Accord with the Palestinians and the peace treaty with Jordan.[49]

One of the most striking traits of Rabin personality, according to Yehudit Auerbach, was what the latter terms as the 'Affiliation Motive', which is 'manifest on the one hand in seeking support and loyalty, and on the other hand in mistrust and hostility towards the immediate environment.'[50] This was evident in Rabin's approach to his social environment.

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[47] Michael Brecher, op. cit., p.11.

[48] Ibid., p.247.

[49] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[50] Yehudit Auerbach, 'Yitzhak Rabin: Portrait of A Leader,' in Daniel J. Elazar and Shmuel Sandler, *Israel at the Polls, 1992* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 1995), p.294.

Indeed three personal traits of Rabin could explain his attitude towards those around him. These may be described as suspicion, fear of intrigue and the need to protect himself from an environment he felt to be continuously hostile.[51] These three traits were exacerbated by the constant rivalry with Shimon Peres over the leadership of the Labour Party and the premiership. It is argued that their complex relationship, which was characterised by mutual mistrust and competition for power, contributed to the immobilism in Israel's foreign policy with regard to peace in Rabin's first term (1974-1977).

It is important to understand that the seeds of Rabin's doubts and lack of faith in Shimon Peres may have been sown as far back as the 1950s. When Rabin was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff, his relations with Zur, the then Chief of Staff was not an easy one. He blamed Peres for this, because as he stated in his memoirs, he felt that the latter had tried to undermine his position as Deputy Chief of Staff by spoiling Rabin's relationship with Zur. In Rabin's words:

> I was sure that Zur's discontent was being nourished by some external factor. I believed that the man who pressed for my replacement was none other than Deputy Defence Minister Shimon Peres. I was a thorn in his side and he wanted me out of the key post I held.[52]

Being not only the same generation but also a similar age, they saw in each other a serious competitor for the premiership—as though two fellow students vying for top influence in the student government throughout a long academic career. Their first political rivalry came in 1974 following the resignation of Prime Minister Golda Meir several months after the debacle of the 1973 War. It was this war which had discredited

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[51] Ibid., p.295.

[52] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.45.

the government in the estimation of the public.[53] As a consequence, the Labour Party was in need of fresh politicians who had not been involved in the debacle of the war. Rabin and Peres were ideal candidates and so declared themselves prepared and willing to run. According to Rabin, both agreed to regard the contest as a fair game and whoever won the other would be loyal. Rabin wrote later that, although he had not believed Peres, he had no objection to this gentleman's agreement—taking it as he did, with a pinch of salt. In Rabin's word: 'I was wary and my inclination was not to believe a word he said. Moreover, I was determined that if he became the next prime minister I would not set foot in the Cabinet.'[54]

Though Rabin won with a narrow margin of 298 against 254, he believed that the contest had not been fought fairly by Peres. Some of Rabin's evidence for this view was that Ezer Weizmann, then a Likud member, disclosed a story about Rabin on the eve of the Six-Day War in which Weizmann claimed that Rabin had suffered a nervous breakdown.[55] Rabin had made a link between the timing of this revelation and the election contest. He cited Weizmann as saying: 'I am not a member of Mapai [Labour], but a friend of Peres.'[56] However, Rabin presented no evidence that Weizmann's timing had been orchestrated with Peres. In fact, in his capacity as Chief of Staff from 1964-68, Rabin had preferred Bar-Lev as a deputy Chief of Staff over Weizmann.[57] Accordingly, one can speculate that Weizmann was looking for a chance to settle an account with

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[53] Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist—Arab Conflict, 1881-1999* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), Chapter Nine.

[54] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.188.

[55] For brief details of this incident see Chapter Four of this thesis.

[56] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.188.

[57] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

Rabin, rather than Peres conspiring against him. Rabin's suspicious nature had led him to assume the worst.

This suspicion of, and personal rivalry with, Peres led Rabin to be reluctant to appoint his rival to a senior position in his cabinet. Peres however expected to be appointed as Minister of Defence. He regarded himself as fit for such a job giving his long career dealing with defence matters.[58] Peres had been Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Defence in 1952 and Director-General the following year. He had been appointed Deputy Minister of Defence in 1959 and remained so until his resignation in 1965. Rabin considered Yigal Allon to be the most suitable for this post and definitely not Peres. He wrote:

> I did not consider Peres suitable, since he had never fought in the IDF and his experience in arms purchasing did not make up for that lack of field experience. But the choice was not up to me. If Peres failed to receive the defence portfolio, the Rafi faction of the Labour Party would withhold its support from the new Cabinet, thereby ripping the party asunder. So, after consultations with Pinhas Sapir and other colleagues, I accepted Peres as defence minister–albeit with a heavy heart. It was an error I would regret and whose price I would pay in full.[59]

The new Prime Minister could not contain his dissatisfaction with Peres assuming the defence portfolio. Taking a dramatic step, he appointed Ariel Sharon as his advisor on defence matters. It was understood that this move was meant to undermine the authority of the Defence Minister and the then Chief of Staff, Mordechai Gur (who enjoyed good relationship with Peres). Their personal relations were to such an extent that Rabin indicated in his memoirs on many occasions that Peres had been in fact preparing for the

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[58] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[59] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.189.

premiership since 1974. He was convinced that his downfall in 1977 had been due to personal intrigue.[60] There was a singular lack of co-operation because they were constantly at war with each other. In fact they hardly co-operated at all in pursuing peace with the Arabs. Rabin was convinced that Peres was constantly plotting against him in order to wrest the reigns of the premiership from his hands.[61] Rabin wrote in 1979 that he

> Was dogged by the feeling that he [Peres] had been 'running' for Prime Minister ever since April 1974, when the Central Committee vote chose me as Labour candidate to form a government.[62]

Their mutual antagonism and mistrust was therefore tremendous and had arguably a substantial and negative impact on the conduct of government. These at least in part hindered the proposed disengagement agreement with Jordan in 1974. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, the Israeli cabinet was divided over this issue. Rabin gave priority to an agreement with Egypt and argued that any concession in the West Bank would cost Labour dearly. This was refuted by polls which showed that a majority among the public would have supported a disengagement agreement with Jordan.[63] Yigal Allon favoured an agreement with Jordan. Peres, at the time opposed to any territorial concession to King Hussein, advocated the notion of functional co-operation with Jordan. His opposition dissuaded Rabin from thinking of such an agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Despite Rabin's support of Yigal Allon's

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Avi Shlaim, op. cit., p.326.

[62] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., pp.241-42.

[63] Yehuda Lukacs, *Israel, Jordan, and the Peace Process* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997), p.136.

territorialist view, his fear of Peres contributed to his rejection of adding his weight behind Allon's ideas.[64]

The Labour Party was at this point divided around two personalities. Those who allied themselves to Rabin were known as Rabin's camp and those who preferred Peres were called Peres' camp. The two men had clashed over almost every national matter. The lack of co-operation between them had led to the creation of new obstacles in the path to peace with Jordan. Suffice it here to mention the Kaddum case of 1975. This case indeed crystallised the schism between the two men. It started when Gush Emunim (the Block of the Faithful), attempted to set up a new settlement in the West Bank in an area which, according to Rabin, was insignificant to the security of Israel.[65] Members of Gush Emunim succeeded in settling on a site they called Elon Moreh in Sebastia near Nablus. Rabin sought to evict the settlers by force only to be opposed by his Minister of Defence Peres. The result of the struggle between the key decision-makers coupled with the support of the NRP for the settlers compelled Rabin to give in. Rabin, out of fear of Peres, allowed the settlers to move to a nearby military camp. The fact that the Kaddum arrangement was imposed on Rabin by Peres left a deep impact on the former. As we shall see later, that was why Rabin insisted in 1992 on keeping the defence portfolio for himself. Without the support of Peres the settlers would have had little chance to succeed because the moderates in the NRP like Yosef Burg, supported the settlers only after they saw the Labour Party was divided over the issue. The result of the lack of co-operation between Peres and Rabin enabled the anti-peace movements, such as Gush

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[64] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[65] Yitzhak Rabin, op. cit., p.241.

Emunim, to create more illegal settlements, a real obstacle to peace (the more settlements the Israeli build, the more difficult it becomes for them to meet the Arabs' demands for peace). This Gush Emunim settlement would not be the last, and the persistent rift between the two statesmen enabled other anti-peace movements to establish yet more illegal settlements. The greater their number, the more difficult a complete turnover of the West Bank to Jordan would become—a result not undesirable to those Israelis with no intention of making any peace with the Arabs.

Labour's electoral defeat in the 1977 election pushed the party into opposition. For the first time since the 1930s, the party was to play no role in foreign policy decision-making. In the party's time either in opposition or sharing power with Likud, Peres was able to consolidate his power within the party at the expense of Rabin. In fact Rabin would have to wait for 15 years to wrest the leadership from Peres. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Rabin had benefited from the 'dirty exercise' and then contested Peres for the party leadership, rekindling the old rivalry between the two men. However, immediately after Labour regained power, the relationship between the two leaders underwent a profound transformation. This transformation, it is argued, played a significant positive role in the peace process and in fact made the Labour-led government capable of taking a decision with regard to the Oslo Accord with the Palestinians and subsequently a full-fledge peace treaty with Jordan.

Though Rabin thought that he had personally brought victory to Labour and that he had personally won the 1992 elections, he was in no position to ignore Peres for two reasons. First, Peres was elected second after Rabin in the 1992 Labour primaries. In an interview on June 26, 1992 by *Hadashot*, an Israeli newspaper, Peres stressed that Rabin

must respect the internal election in which Peres came second only to Rabin.[66] Second, Peres still enjoyed control over the various official bodies and committees within the party. As demonstrated in the former chapter, unlike Rabin's supporters, all of Peres' supporters within the party were placed in positions they could realistically expect to win the 1992 election and as a consequence they were elected to the Knesset. Nonetheless this time, learning from the experience of his first term, he decided to be firm with Peres. He kept the ministry of defence (the second most important portfolio after the premiership) for himself, and offered Peres the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore Rabin showed his mistrust, stipulating that Peres would only deal with the multilateral negotiations and would have nothing to do with the more important bilateral ones. Following the Madrid Conference in October 1991, it had been decided to break down the negotiations into two separate tracks: the bilateral and the multilateral ones. The former deals with border disputes and the latter with wider issues such as regional security and arms control, water, refugees, the environment, and the economic prosperity of the region. It was obvious that the prospects for success of the multilateral negotiations would depend on the success of the bilateral ones. As a consequence, the bilateral negotiations were far more important and in this Rabin had secured a sort of marginalisation of Peres, albeit only for a short time.

Despite this firm attitude towards Peres, and due to the change in the context of their relationship, both understood that they should put their personal differences aside and work together in order to bring peace. The reason for this was ironically most likely was the age factor: by now, both were in their early seventies and knew that this might be

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[66] *Hadashot*, June 26, 1992.

their last chance to be in power.[67] Nawaf Massalha concurs with this point. He maintains that

> Peres and Rabin decided to co-operate because of the age factor. They understood that this was the last chance for them to lead the party. Do not forget that Rabin and Peres were regarded as the 1948 generation. Older generation never lost elections. The last time in 1973, Golda Meir won the election and handed over the government to Rabin and Peres' generation. This generation had lost all elections before 1992. Their differences contributed first of all in (sic) Labour's successive defeats and then in (sic) the paralysis of the party. As a consequence, they had little choice but to co-operate.[68]

In addition both now recognised that there were realistic chances for peace and that if they were to co-operate, they could go down in history as the 'great peacemakers'.[69] Both, argued Ahmed Tibi, were obsessed with grandiose notions of making the final and lasting peace. The personality clash, which had torn them apart, was almost invisible at this time.[70] Something which should not be interpreted as being the end to their animosity, but more simply as its subjugation to a much greater, common, goal: peace for their country and a glorious legacy for themselves. As Yossi Beilin has argued:

> Private meetings...were conducted in a cordial and constructive spirit, in spite of the intense animosity between the two men, animosity which had not abated even when their working relationship was institutionalised and became more formal.[71]

Peres's acceptance of this relegated role in the peace process can be ascribed to two factors. First, as a result of his defeat to Rabin in the primaries and for the latter's decisive victory over Shamir. Peres had reconciled himself to having to play the role of

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[67] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 30, 2000.

[68] Interview with Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem. February 8, 2000.

[69] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[70] Interview with Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[71] Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace, From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), p.73.

the number two man. Second, Peres' highly optimistic outlook for the prospects for peace made this hard pill a much easier one to swallow.[72] Peres wrote in his memoirs that his loyalty to Rabin was connected to the progress of the peace process. He stated:

> I pledged that my behaviour would be determined entirely by one criterion: the progress of the peace process. If that progress were satisfactory, I would be the most loyal and disciplined of Rabin's ministers. If, however, the peace process were allowed to grind to halt, I would not hesitate to raise the banner of rebellion.[73]

It was not easy for Rabin to put his trust in a man he once described as 'the indefatigable underminer.'[74] However, Rabin was sure that this time Peres was serious about peace. Peres wrote:

> In time, Rabin grew convinced that this was indeed my sincere and unswerving resolve. On this basis, a close and fruitful working relationship between us evolved. It enabled us-especially during the months of secret negotiations with the PLO- to meet alone, in an atmosphere of confidence and discretion, to discuss and to argue, without the argument becoming personal, and without it leaking out in the next day's press.[75]

Their working relations at this time were in a stark contrast to those during the period of Rabin's first government. This became increasingly important especially when Rabin's faith in the ability of the Palestinian delegation to be amenable at the Washington talks was shaken. He believed that Palestinian negotiators should be free from any pressures imposed by the fundamentalists within the Occupied Territories, but also from the PLO's influence. In December 1992, in reaction to the kidnapping of a border

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[72] Interview with Nechman Tall, Tel Aviv, February 14, 2000.

[73] Shimon Peres, op. cit., p.314.

[74] Avi Shlaim, op. cit., p.326.

[75] Shimon Peres, op. cit., p.314.

policeman by Hamas,[76] Rabin took the unprecedented decision of ordering the deportation of more than 400 Palestinians to Lebanon.[77] Though deporting Palestinians was not a novelty, this was the biggest number of deportees ever expelled during the Intifada. To Rabin's surprise, the Lebanese government refused to accept the deportees and as a result the deportees remained in the no-man's land between Israel and Lebanon. In fact, they suffered a cold winter and there was a daily coverage by the international media of their plight. Suffice it here to cite a headline of the British daily newspaper *The Times* which reads: 'The deportees may die tomorrow.'[78]

Although this step had been meant to undercut Hamas' support in the Occupied Territories and to give the Palestinian peace negotiators a freer hand, it backfired. There was international condemnation of the deportation policy. The United Nations Security Council strongly condemned the Israeli government, describing it as an occupying power, and demanded a 'safe and immediate return to the occupied territories of all those deported.'[79] Rabin found himself in the middle of a crisis. There was an international request that Israel retreat from its decision and some members of the Security Council even suggested the imposition of sanctions against Israel.[80] Interestingly, there was the unequivocal American opposition to the deportation incident. Rabin's ill-judged decision caused some delay in the resumption of the next

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[76] Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, was found during the Intifada by Sheikh, Ahmed Yassin from Gaza. It carried out many violent activities in order to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

[77] *The Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 1992.

[78] *The Times*, December 24, 1992.

[79] *The Jerusalem Post*, December 20, 1992.

[80] Robert Slater, op. cit., p.453.

round of talks scheduled for February in Washington. To solve this dilemma, Rabin arrived at a 'package' agreement with the American administration. There were three elements to this agreement. First, the Israel Cabinet was to compromise over the issue of the deportees by allowing them to return though not at once, secondly, the United States was to take measures to ensure that sanctions would not be imposed on Israel, and finally the United States asked for the resumption of the now-suspended peace talks.[81]

Negotiations were resumed in April. Moreover, Rabin agreed to the inclusion of Faisal Husseini from East Jerusalem to the Palestinian delegations. He hoped that Husseini would contribute in helping the Palestinian negotiators to accept a limited self-rule. In keeping with the previous idea of their remaining distinct from the PLO, the assumption was that the Husseini's inclusion could encourage them further in taking up an independent stand from the PLO. Husseini, however, had no such effect whatsoever: the fact remained that he and the rest of the Palestinian delegation were instructed by the PLO.

With the passage of time and the lack of progress, Rabin became frustrated.[82] He realised that he would not be able to keep his electoral promise of reaching an agreement with the Palestinians within six to nine months from his assuming office. His attempts to strike a deal with Syria and the Palestinian negotiators in Washington ended in a deadlock. He was in an awkward situation and at this time Peres came to his help.[83] Peres offered Rabin the draft of an agreement with the PLO. Indeed Yossi Beilin, the

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[81] Ibid., p.457.

[82] Interview with Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

[83] Interview with Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

Deputy Foreign Minister and Peres' right hand man, had initiated the Oslo talks secretly without Rabin's knowledge.[84] Initially he did not even inform Peres because he was dedicated to the success of this attempt. In his words,

> I decided not to share information on the existence of the track with anyone. I knew that if I passed this on to Peres he would be obliged to brief Rabin, and I feared that Rabin would demand an end to the process before it had even begun.[85]

Nevertheless, when this back channel became promising, Peres was eventually informed. Rabin, who had begun to lose faith in the prospect for success in the Washington negotiations, added this to his realisation that an agreement with Syria was unlikely and probably unpopular with the Israeli public, finally approved Peres' approach with the PLO. According to Aharon Kleiman, a political scientist at Tel Aviv University: 'it was only the visionary Peres who could come up with such a package, and only the security-minded pragmatist Rabin could sell it to the public.'[86] As a result, one could assume that without the evolution of this kind of rapport and partnership between the two rivals, the prospects for the Oslo accord and consequently the final peace treaty with Jordan would have been very dark. Indeed, each one complemented the other. Peres had the vision and will but lacked the public credibility, whereas Rabin had the credibility and will but lacked the vision. It was a revolution in Rabin's strategic thinking. Accepting the PLO as a partner and leaving behind the Jordanian option were the two hallmarks of Rabin's new approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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[84] For full details of the secret channel, see Yossi Beilin, 1999, op. cit.

[85] Ibid., p.62.

[86] Interview with Aharon Kleiman, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

Explaining the Evolution of Rabin's Thinking

As argued above, Rabin's Jewish prism in conjunction with his military past had shaped his approach *vis-à-vis* the Arab-Israeli conflict. It was argued as well that security remained the key to Rabin's positions on issues with bearing on national security. He was convinced that arriving at peace with the Arabs could tremendously enhance the national security of Israel. Rabin's eschewing of his state centric approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict was a revolutionary change in his strategic thinking. This section provides an account for this change.

One crucial factor is that Rabin's move towards a Palestinian option was in reality a gradual one. Until the eruption of the Intifada, his approach to the Palestinian problem had been, as we have seen, consistent: the Jordanian option was seemed to him the only game in town. As a consequence, he had adopted the Allon Plan, which was designed to partition the West Bank between Jordan and Israel. Rabin's insistence on dealing with Jordan was reinforced by his generally state-centric approach to the Palestinian problem: Jordan is a state and therefore entitled to and worthy of being a negotiating partner. The Lebanon War triggered the first change in Rabin's strategic way of approaching the problem. He observed that the Arab-Israeli/Jewish conflict was transforming itself into a Palestinian-Israeli conflict.[87] This was an important change, but he still could not bring himself to abandon his belief in a state—in this case Jordan—as being the sole legitimate partner to sit down with at the bargaining table. A nation without a state was to him still, in the end, a nation which does not truly exist. However, the Lebanon War made him see that the Palestinians were a national entity even if devoid of a state in or

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[87] *Davar*, March 27, 1988.

through which to express and display this. They were henceforth to be included in future negotiations—but still as an adjunct to the Jordanian delegation.[88]

As previously demonstrated, before the start of the Intifada Rabin attached little importance to the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza: with no internal administration, no army, and no official recognised government, they did not seem to pose a serious threat to the survival of the states around them and so there seemed to be no urgency to find a solution to their problem.[89] This perception certainly prevented Rabin from fully understanding, not to mention predicting the Intifada.

As was demonstrated in Chapter Three, the Intifada triggered another significant change in Rabin's basic way of conceiving the issue. It suddenly made what had hitherto been regarded as a foreign affairs concern into a critical internal crisis. Humming along with the same old policies and approach now became impossible. These people were obviously not being controlled by a remote state (Jordan or the PLO) but internally by an indigenous leadership. The Palestinians were their own people; it even showed him that they could bring the Jordanians to the negotiating table but not the other way around. As a consequence, but still wanting to avoid direct contact with the PLO, he pressed Shamir to adopt his ideas about elections in the Occupied Territories in order to be able to initiate a new peace process with locally elected local Palestinians. Rabin sought to start negotiating an interim agreement with them, hoping nevertheless that Jordan would join in the negotiations for a final agreement. The reasons that he wanted Jordanian

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[88] Interview with Aharon Kleiman, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

[89] Interview with Mark Heller, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

involvement in negotiations were first to bypass the PLO and as a consequence to obstruct the possibility of the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Rabin's party had not been in power when the Madrid conference was inaugurated. Under Shamir, Israel had refused to deal with the Palestinians separately, only agreeing to their participation in a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation. Shamir, committed to the 'no-inch' policy, instructed his delegation not to concede to the Palestinians. However, Rabin's assumption of power marked a fresh approach. Firstly, spurred on by the stalemate in the talks, and realising that the Jordanians could not speak for the Palestinians, he agreed to deal with them as a separate delegation. In an interview with the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot* Rabin said that

> We have to talk to the Palestinians...after the Intifada, the Palestinians are beyond the stage where others speak for them. Therefore those who still delude themselves that King Hussein could speak for the Palestinians have not correctly understood what has happened here.[90]

A year after, Rabin became convinced that the Palestinian delegation had no power to move. He realised that only the PLO had the decisive power to conclude an interim agreement. This shift in perception marked an important precondition for the progress of the peace process and the Oslo breakthrough. The problem remained that Rabin had never before even toyed with the idea of acknowledging the PLO as a partner. Now he had to decide whether he both wanted to and could—as a policy move to sell to his people—acknowledge the PLO as a legitimate partner or not, thus jeopardising the whole peace process.[91]

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[90] *Yediot Aharonot*, March 7, 1991.

[91] Interview with Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

There were several factors that led Rabin to agree to deal with the PLO and conclude an agreement with its leader, Yasser Arafat. First, Rabin came to the conclusion that the realisation of the Jordanian option was impossible.[92] Equally important was his assessment that the non-PLO Palestinian delegation to the Washington talks would never deliver and that only the PLO could reach a binding agreement with Israel.

Second, Rabin's view of what we might call 'time' had changed. In the 1980s, Rabin had subscribed to the school that argued that time was in Israel's favour. This means that it could wait until the Arabs changed and agreed to Israel's terms for a peace settlement. This school of thought had paid little attention to the impact of this approach on Israeli society. The need to be constantly alert, and ready to pay for defence measures and budget for any confrontation had been a very emotional stressful and financially costly experience for Israeli society. In conjunction with regional and global changes; as well as the convening of the Madrid conference (see Chapter Six) and subsequent peace negotiations, Rabin began to view the time factor differently. According to Efraim Inbar, Rabin 'realized that Israeli society increasingly displayed signs of fatigue and was becoming clearly more reluctant to pay the price of a protracted conflict with the Arabs.'[93] Eitan Haber, Rabin's close advisor, considered Rabin's view of the weakness within Israeli society as a key aspect of Rabin's strategic perspective.[94] Despite Rabin's hawkish image, this new, typical dovish assessment of pressing nature of the problem brought him closer to Peres and the dovish wing of the Labour Party. Rabin also came to believe that Israel had to move quickly because there would be little

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[92] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[93] Efraim Inbar, op. cit., p.161.

[94] Ibid., p.162.

time at its disposal: Yossi Alpher argued that Rabin believed that 'due to regional and international changes Israel had a short-term 'window of opportunity', which was not going to stay a long-time and so Israel should not miss this opportunity.[95] If peace were not to be reached, then war would be inevitable. This was another typically dovish argument that Rabin now was embracing. In a speech delivered in December at the International Centre for Peace in the Middle East in Tel Aviv, Rabin argued that 'Israel had a seven-year 'window of opportunity' to find a solution to the core conflict and make peace with its neighbours.'[96]

A third factor was the shift in Rabin's mind-set. The structural changes in the international system, coupled together with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Iraq by the American-led coalition had created a new strategic environment. Rabin was quick to recognise the impact of these changes. Many countries established diplomatic ties with Israel in the early 1990s. This had an impact on the way Rabin viewed the standing of Israel among other nations. These changes indeed minimised—or simply lessened—the influence of the Jewish prism. In his inaugural speech to the Knesset, Rabin noted:

> It is our duty, to ourselves and to our children, to see the new world as it is now... to do everything possible so that the State of Israel fits into this world whose face is changing. No longer are we necessarily a 'people that dwells alone,' and no longer is it true that the whole world is against us. We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in thrall for almost half a century. We have to stop thinking that the whole world is against us.[97]

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[95] Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

[96] *The Jerusalem Post*, December 18, 1992.

[97] *Proceeding of the Knesset*, July 13, 1992, (in Hebrew)

This speech marked a fundamental ideological shift in Rabin's perception. This new outlook resulted from the fact that Rabin had a relatively open belief system. Oli Holsti made a distinction between 'closed belief' system and an 'open belief' system.[98] In a closed belief system, new information is interpreted in a way to fit it within the existing belief system. Information that does not fit is simply excluded. In an open belief system, new information can indeed change the existing set of beliefs.

Assuming that Rabin had developed an open belief system towards the world around him, we may surmise that the sweeping changes on the international scene had led him to come to view the external environment in a positive light. In December 1991, the United Nation General Assembly repealed its 1975 resolution that equated Zionism with racism. Many countries which had voted in favour equating Zionism with racism reversed their position in 1991. This new environment ended for Rabin Israel's perceived isolation in international politics. Joseph Alpher argues that

> Jewish history and our perception that we exist in a hostile environment enhanced the level of threat perception in particular among the right. This factor was weakened in the early 1990s due to the regional and global developments.[99]

Rabin's openness helped him draw a clear conceptual distinction among his adversaries between moderate 'good boys' who were ready to peacefully coexist with Israel and fundamentalist rejectionists 'bad boys' who were responsible for the deterioration of 'current security' in Israel. In fact his decision to deport some Hamas activists from the Occupied Territories to Lebanon helped him see the difference between those

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98 Steve Smith, 'Belief System and the Study of International Relations,' in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds.), *Belief System and International Relations* (UK: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988), p.19.

99 Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

Palestinians who were opposed the peace process; those who were opposed to the very existence of Israel; and those who were moderate and ready to live in peace with Israel. Hamas and Islamic Jihad were fundamentalists and therefore had to be weakened. That was why he took the unprecedented decision to deport as many as 415 of them. Once this distinction crystallised firmly in Rabin's mind, he began to view the PLO as a possible partner.

A final factor that pushed Rabin to deal with the PLO is to be found in Israeli domestic politics and, as has already been elaborated, in particular following the 1992 elections. The formation of the most dovish government in the history of Israel constituted a sufficient condition to move Israel towards peace with its neighbours. Without such a combination of Israeli parties, the historic decision on peace could not have been reached. The dovish majority of Labour ministers in Rabin's government allied with the Meretz ministers were of a number unprecedented in Israel's history. Meretz, with 12 seats in the Knesset, was the senior partner that Rabin could not ignore. In their coalition agreement with Rabin, Meretz ministers stipulated that the ban on talking with the PLO would be lifted within six months. Naomi Chazen, a Meretz member and currently deputy speaker of the Knesset, said:

> We played a very important role in lifting the ban on talks with the PLO. We urged Rabin to proceed with the peace process with the Palestinians and sometimes threatened to withdraw from the coalition.[100]

As a result, the government sponsored a bill that called for allowing direct contact with the PLO. Meretz kept the pressure on Rabin to live up to his electoral promise. In June

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100 Interview with Naomi Chazen, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

1993, for example, Meretz leader, Shulamit Aloni sent Rabin an urgent letter warning him that her party was going to leave the government should there be no advance in their dialogue with the Palestinians.[101]

Labour was also allied to Shas (six seats in the Knesset). Shas leader, Aryeh Deri, a Minister of Interior, was involved in a political scandal. He was accused of personal and administrative misuse of office and accordingly placed under investigation. He was also accused of transferring funds from his ministry to schools run by his party. In July 1993 the Attorney General, Yosef Harish called on Deri to resign from the government due to a pending indictment. Both Rabin and Peres felt that the stability of their coalition was threatened by this development. It was feared that Deri would withdraw his entire party from the government in retribution.[102] This development possibly created further pressure on Rabin's government to proceed quickly with the PLO. Peres said 'we must hurry or we may end up with a peace treaty but no government to sign it.'[103]

To sum up, the combination of the above mentioned factors proved to be decisive in pushing Rabin to deal with the PLO. Reluctant by nature, Rabin was in an awkward dilemma; either to proceed with the PLO, conclude an accord, and go down in history as the first Israeli prime minister to accept dealing formally with the PLO, or to continue to refuse all relations with them, thus slowing down the process—perhaps to a halt. With this he may also have lost his government and, even worse, the leadership of the Labour

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101 *Davar*, July 7, 1993.

102 David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO, The Rabin Government's Road to Peace* (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc, 1996), p.68.

103 Quoted in Ibid., p.69.

Party. Rabin finally chose to sign an interim agreement with the PLO.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the relative importance of personality in the making of foreign policy in Israel. The significance of such an internal factor in Israel's peacemaking stems from the fact that Israel's decision-making process is highly personalised because a few, highly placed individuals take most of the crucial decisions. In fact personality became an increasingly important factor in Israeli politics throughout the 1990s: the election of 1992 crystallising its pivotal role. It has been argued that Rabin's own personality is of a singular interest if one wishes to account for the Israel's decision to conclude a peace.

The key to understanding Rabin's change in approach was his particularly adaptable, open belief system and personality which enabled him to absorb new ideas, and to be affected by new developments. As a consequence, his view of the world and indeed of the Arab-Israeli conflict altered considerably during his time in office. We saw how at first his firm belief that Israel was isolated in world politics was deeply steeped in a Jewish tradition which like a prism filtered through it the perception of outsiders' behaviour. This cultural prism is of course not only exclusive to Rabin, but is one which affects the vision of most of Israeli's elite. Given this and Rabin's personal experience as a military man, it led him initially and for many years to view the Arab-Israeli conflict through a realpolitik lens. He was convinced that for Israel to survive in its hostile environment, it should develop a strong army. National security long remained the key to understanding Rabin's approach to the Palestinian problem.

Until the outbreak of the Intifada, Rabin had maintained a state-centric view to the Palestinian problem. According to this view, Israel should seek territorial compromise with Jordan in order to solve once and for all aspects of the Palestinian problem. Rabin learnt from the Intifada that no one could speak on behalf of the Palestinians except themselves. His state-centric worldview was replaced by a multi-dimensional view in which the Palestinian problem as such became the core of the conflict. Hence he gradually started to replace the Jordanian option with a Palestinian one, culminating in his recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians.

Not only was Rabin known for his mistrust of the outside world, but also that of his colleagues in the Labour Party. He never trusted Shimon Peres in particular. His perception of Peres as a constant plotter in fact partially hindered the peace process. This was conspicuous in his first term as Prime Minister (1974-77). Their competition paralysed Rabin's first government. However, with the passage of time and many years in opposition, both rivals agreed to co-operate in Rabin's second government. The moment Rabin was sure that Peres' paramount objective was to achieve peace, he began to trust him. It is argued that without the working coalition between them, the Oslo Accord and the peace treaty with Jordan would have most likely never been reached.

However, matters were much more complicated than the personal rivalry came to bear on their rapport: Rabin and Peres were not playing in a vacuum. The Israeli domestic scene was important. It is demonstrated that the dovish make up of the government urged and helped Rabin shift his political alignment accordingly. Rabin was transformed from a hawk to a dove in all but name. His image among the public remained that of the hawk—enhanced by his decision to expel the Hamas activists—and

his reputation as Mr. Security enabled him to sell the Oslo Accord to the Israeli public. What was unique about Rabin was the fact that the Israeli public trusted him and his judgement.

This chapter has demonstrated the importance of personality on domestic politics and on the decision-making process in Israel with particular regard to the peace process. Yet, to fully understand Israel's historic decision to make peace with its adversaries, one also needs to evaluate the impact of external players and the changes at the regional and global levels and to see what effect there had on the stance of key Israeli politicians. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX
EXTERNAL DYNAMICS AND DOMESTIC IMPERATIVES

It was demonstrated in the previous chapter that the politics of personality was becoming an increasingly important factor in Israeli politics throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This became even more apparent during the course of the 1992 general election. Having paid due attention to that feature of politics, however, this chapter focuses on a different but interrelated dimension of the peace process, that of how external factors impacted on the bureaucratic politics of Israeli peacemaking strategies. The demise of the Cold War, the subsequent hegemonic status of the United States in the Middle East, coupled with the defeat of Iraq (potentially, the most formidable foe of Israel) in 1991, indeed both changed Israel's regional and global environments. Crucially, as we saw in the last chapter, these developments provided both the backdrop and the context in which the Israelis operated.

Certainly, it may be argued that changes in the external environment and specifically the end of the Cold War engendered a positive environment for the conduct of a peace process.[1] However, it is useful to make a distinction between what was *necessary* and what was *sufficient* for achieving peace. The external factors provided the necessary pre-conditions for what may be termed the initiation of conflict resolution in the Middle East. These factors, as this chapter demonstrates, played a visible role in Israel's foreign policy. Nevertheless, these factors were perceived and reacted to differently by successive Israeli governments. Hence, a linkage exists between the external and the

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[1] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 30, 2000.

domestic. These differences, resulting from reactions to external factors, deepened the political distinction between Labour and Likud. This chapter demonstrates that external factors, including the role of both the United States and Jordan, impacted upon the bureaucratic politics of Israeli peacemaking.

This chapter is made up of three sections. In the first section, the impact of the United States on Israel's peacemaking is assessed. It is demonstrated that to understand how the Israeli leaders viewed the role of the United States in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, one has to look at the policy preferences of different groups within the Israeli governments. Section two analyses how the Labour Party perceived Jordan and how the behaviour of Jordan influenced the stances of key players within the Labour Party. Indeed, Jordan's polices did accelerate an orientation towards the Palestinian option in Labour's peace strategy. The final section addresses the bearing of regional and global changes on the perceptions of Israeli decision-makers.

The United States in Israeli Foreign Policy

As has been demonstrated throughout the previous chapters, Labour and Likud were divided over the peace process. Equally importantly, they were divided over the role of the United States in the peace process and in particular over the role of the so-called 'special relationship' in Israel's peace strategy.[2] Though much has been written on the relationship between Israel and the United States, little attention has been given to the relative value of the United States in Israeli approaches to peacemaking in the Middle

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[2] Jonathan Rynhold, 'Labour, Likud, the 'Special Relationship' and the Peace Process, 1988-96,' *Israel Affairs*, vol.3, no..3+4 (1997), pp.239-40.

East. This section demonstrates that the American role in Israel's positions on the peace process was, to a large extent, a function of the differences between Likud and Labour regarding the idea of territorial compromise. Differences between Likud and Labour over the interpretation of what constituted Israeli core strategic interests were important factors that accounted for Israel's competing approaches *vis-à-vis* the United States. Indeed domestic differences within Israel actually provide the key to understanding Israeli policy towards the United States.

Co-ordination between Israel and the United States with respect to peace in the Middle East depends largely on Israeli governments' readiness to accept the American 'land for peace' formula.[3] The formula of 'land for peace', as we have seen, characterised the positions of successive American administrations since 1967.[4] It follows that Labour's declared policy of territorial compromise put it in a better position than Likud (with its infamous no-inch policy) to co-ordinate with the American administrations.

By the same token, the relative importance of the United States—as seen by Israeli leaders—to Israel's security determined the level of readiness of Israeli leaders to accept territorial concessions. There is no doubt that the United States has become, since the 1967 War, the major component of Israeli defence and security policies. The United States has provided Israel with the weapons and technology necessary for Israel to maintain a qualitative edge over the Arab World.[5] The United States, in fact, acquired

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[3] Jonathan Rynhold, 'Israeli-American relations and the peace process,' *MERIA, (Middle East Review of International Affairs)*, vol.4, no.2 (June 2000), p.2.

[4] Jonathan Rynhold, 1997, op. cit., p.243.

[5] For more details on American military aid to Israel, see A. F. K. Organski, *The $36 Billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in U.S Assistance to Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), and

even greater strategic importance during and in the aftermath of the 1973 War. It supplied Israel with weapons of high efficiency during the war and indeed prevented Israel's defeat. Israel became more dependent on the American military and economic aid after the war. Furthermore, the close Israeli-American relationship served as a deterrent against a perceived Soviet attack.[6] This dependency relationship was further enhanced, as Israel became more diplomatically isolated, due to the use of oil as a weapon by Arab counties. Israel, therefore, had to rely increasingly on American diplomatic aid. Interestingly and given Israel's qualitative military superiority in the Middle East, it was unable to deter an Iraqi attack in 1991 and as a result American troops had to defend Israel.

Therefore, this asymmetric relationship is arguably similar to a 'client-patron' relationship in which Israeli acquiesced to what may be termed American strategic interests in the region. However, reality was always somewhat different. Israeli leaders quite often defied the American will and indeed sometimes pursued policies without taking into account the wider implications of their decisions and without consideration of American interests in the region. In successive Israeli governments, one could discern four positions regarding the role of the United States in the Middle East peace process. These could be labelled as ultra-nationalism, conservatism, realism, and progressivism.[7]

Bernard Reich, *The United States and Israel: Influence in the Special Relationship* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984).

[6] Interview with Mark Heller, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[7] Jonathan Rynhold, 2000, op. cit., p.2

The ultra-nationalist approach has been represented by parties on the right of Likud but also by the right wing within Likud. Their core ideology—the integrity of the 'land of Israel'—clashed with the American 'land for peace' principle. Furthermore, this group feared the implications of an increasingly dependent relationship with the United States. This, according to ultra-nationalists, would weaken Israel's deterrence.[8] They expected that American administrations would not interfere in the peace process. Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, for example, did not regard co-ordination with the United States over the peace process as necessary.[9] The ultra-nationalists relied on the 'special relationship' in their pursuit of their policy *vis-à-vis* the Occupied Territories. They believed that Israel could consolidate its grip over the West Bank and Gaza without necessarily damaging its relations with the American administrations. That was why, for example, Yitzhak Shamir confronted the Bush administration over the loan guarantee issue in 1992. He hoped that the pro-Israeli forces within the American political system would help him dissuade President Bush from linking the loan guarantee to freezing of settlements in the Occupied Territories.

The second position was a conservative one, which was represented by what we might term the pragmatic wing of Likud. This approach assumed that Israel should keep the Occupied Territories. However, the underlying attitude was governed by a pure realpolitik approach.[10] This approach is best represented by the former Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who accepted the idea of minimal territorial compromise when he assumed power in 1996. Though conservatives recognised the pivotal role that could be

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[8] Ibid., p.2.

[9] Ibid., p.2.

[10] Ibid., p.4.

played by the United States, they voiced doubts about the commitment of the United States, particularly in the face of its isolationist tendencies.[11] They viewed the United States' role in the peace process as only a facilitator. Indeed, Benjamin Netanyahu, who sought to minimise the role of the American administration in the peace process, changed his approach after the armed clash with the Palestinians in September 1996. He began to recognise that the role of the United States was indispensable in preventing the collapse of the peace process.

The progressive approach is represented by the leftist circles within Labour and also Meretz. Advocates of this approach believed that security could not be achieved without peace. In addition, they believed that security could not be attained by military power alone, but by meeting the Palestinians' demand for the right to self-determination, and through the creation of a regional framework for economic co-operation.[12] Without economic development in the region, the area would be governed by extremist forces, which would be strengthened by poverty and lack of economic development. These radical forces, armed perhaps with unconventional weapons would, it was assumed, be very threatening to the stability of the region. Aware of the centrality of the economic development to the stability of the region, Shimon Peres wrote in 1993: 'Our ultimate goal is the creation of a regional community of nations, within a common market and elected centralized bodies, modeled on the European Community.'[13]

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[11] Ibid., p.4.

[12] For more details of the economic interdependence in the Middle East, see Shimon Peres with Arye Naor, *The New Middle East* (Great Britain: Element Books Limited, 1993), pp.61-74.

[13] Ibid., p.62.

However, the progressives viewed the American role primarily as a supplier of funds necessary for the regional project to materialise. The United States could, according to this approach, use its economic strength to reward those who were willing to proceed with peace. To the progressives , the role of the United States in the peace process was not significant. Yossi Beilin, for example, initiated the back channel negotiations with the Palestinians in Oslo despite the fact the United States was sponsoring the Washington talks. Indeed, Oslo was initiated and reached by both sides without the knowledge of the Clinton administration.[14]

Though both progressives and realists (see below) within Labour emphasised the importance of security, they viewed the American role in achieving Israel's security differently. Unlike the realists, the progressives downplayed the importance of the American role in Israel's national security. They maintained that only by resolving the Palestinian problem in a way that satisfy the Palestinians could Israel achieve complete security.[15] However, the progressives sought American involvement in order to overcome some procedural problems and to help facilitate any agreement with the Israeli public. Shimon Peres, for instance, concluded the London Agreement with King Hussein in April 1987 and tried, but failed, to convince the American Secretary of State to present the agreement as an American proposal. Even after reaching an understanding with the Palestinians in 1993, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres sought to

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[14] Yossi Beilin, *Touching Peace: From the Oslo Accord to a Final Agreement* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999).

[15] Jonathan Rynhold, 2000, op. cit., p.8.

convince Warren Christopher, then Secretary of State, to present the agreement as an American document, but Christopher refused.[16]

However, the most important position was the one adopted by Yitzhak Rabin; this may be termed realism.[17] As a result, it warrants more attention in this section. Realism was derived from the pre-state era and was greatly encouraged by David Ben-Gurion. Its emphasis has been on security. The realists' position was enhanced by the fact that they have a strong power base in the army and because of their importance for Labour, with its dovish platform, to help win elections.[18] This traditionally provided this group with a form of asymmetric power within Labour.

Rabin was, as we have already seen, the most important realist. He recognised the need to reorient Israeli foreign policy from a European to an American direction in the late 1950s. The humiliation of the European powers in the Suez crisis of 1956 convinced Rabin that essentially only the United States was important in the strategic game.[19] That was one of the reasons why he lobbied so hard to gain the ambassadorship to Washington upon his retirement from the army in 1968.[20] He dedicated much of his time to consolidating or creating a strategic relationship with the United States. In 1969, for example, Rabin encouraged the Israeli government to adopt tougher military steps

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[16] Yossi Beilin, op. cit., p.120.

[17] The use of realism here should not be confused with Realism as an approach to study International Relations.

[18] Jonathan Rynhold, 2000, op. cit., p.6.

[19] Efraim Inbar, *Rabin and Israel's National Security* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.35.

[20] Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p.95.

against Egyptian targets during the War of Attrition. Rabin believed this would cement a better relationship with the United States and would also project an image of Israel as strong and ready to use force in order to defend itself so as to obtain more weapons.[21]

Indeed, what had governed the realists' stand on the Occupied Territories was its importance in enhancing Israel's security. Realists within Labour had no ideological affinity with the West Bank and Gaza. As a consequence, they viewed the areas only in terms of defending the country and of providing strategic depth. Allon's plan (discussed in Chapter Two) should be understood within this context.

To realists, there was no better security guarantee than tying the United States to Israel's security. Rabin was convinced of the imperative nature of a close strategic co-operation with the United States. He never concealed this rationale and in 1976 he stated that 'Israel's mere existence will be in jeopardy, in case of total desertion by the United States.'[22] To Rabin and indeed all realists, the utility of the United States lay in five areas. Those were financial aid, weapons, diplomatic aid (such as preventing the United Nations from adopting anti-Israel resolutions), facilitating Israel's contact with Jews in countries that have no diplomatic relations with Israel, and deterring the Soviet Union from directly attacking Israel.[23] Joseph Sisco, a former Under-secretary of State—who

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[21] Efraim Inbar, 'Yitzhak Rabin and Israel's National Security,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol.20, no.2 (June 1997), pp.26-27.

[22] Quoted in Ibid., p.27.

[23] Ibid., p.27.

worked closely with Rabin—maintained that Rabin believed that Israel's security 'was inextricably linked to the United States.'[24]

Rabin, therefore, believed that the role of the United States in the peace process was indispensable.[25] Even after reaching an agreement with the Palestinians, Rabin waited for the blessing of the United States before proceeding.[26] Hence, co-ordination with the United States was central to the realists' foreign policy. Rabin sought a real American involvement in the peace process with the Arab countries and the Palestinians in order to reduce the security risks associated with withdrawal. As Ra'nan Cohen argues:

> Rabin was for a peace that could enhance our sense of security. But he also understood that any peace treaty that entails Israeli territorial concessions would involve some security risks. Therefore, Rabin, and indeed many Labourites, believed that it was not possible for Israel to concede lands without a real American involvement in and commitment to the peace process. Rabin thought that an American involvement would be central for Israel's security[27]

Rabin, for example, strongly believed that Israel should appear serious in the peace process to guarantee American support.[28] However, Rabin thought that a deal with the Arabs should be accompanied by some material benefits for Israel from the United States.[29] For example, in 1975, Rabin only agreed to sign Sinai II after signing a memorandum of understanding with the United States. Moreover, Rabin, and indeed

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[24] David Horovitz (ed.), *Yitzhak Rabin: Soldier of Peace*, (Great Britain: Peter Halban Publishers Ltd, 1996), p.47.

[25] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, February 7, 2000.

[26] Itamar Rabinovitch, *The Brink of Peace: Israel and Syria 1992-96* (Tel Aviv: Yediot Ahranot, 1998) (in Hebrew), p.44.

[27] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[28] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[29] David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO, The Rabin Government's Road to Peace* (USA: Westview Press, Inc, 1996), p.120.

Labour more generally, accepted American initiatives such as the Shultz Plan and Baker's five points. Labour brought down the government in March 1990 when Prime Minster Shamir rejected Baker's five points.

As a consequence, Labour's support for the 'land for peace' principle has been consistent with the long-standing American position. The American position has been constant since 1967. It regards exchanging land for peace as the only viable solution to the Palestinian problem. Every single American administration has reiterated this commitment. This became even more important when the Arabs came to the conclusion that only with active American involvement was Israel expected to concede. This trend received momentum in the 1970s when Egypt realised that the United States, not the Soviet Union, held the key to a solution. Indeed, the Soviet Union had broken off its diplomatic relations with Israel as a protest to Israel's attack in 1967. This contention was further enhanced by the collapse of the eastern bloc and the end of the Cold War, when the United States emerged as the undisputed hegemonic power in the Middle East.

The result of the interaction of these four positions within the NUG (1984-90) was what might be described as a kind of immobilism in Israel's foreign policy. Israel, in effect, was unable to present a unified position regarding peace and therefore pursued two different foreign policies. In addition to these internal differences over the relative role assigned to the United States in peacemaking in the Middle East, there was another major difference between Likud and Labour regarding the role that could be played by pro-Israeli forces in the United States.

As was discussed above, Likud's ideological positions and its actual policies in the Occupied Territories were incompatible with the American administrations' constant stand. It follows that Likud-led governments would not be able to follow their aggressive policies in the West Bank and Gaza and to maintain close co-operation with the American administrations. In order to solve this dilemma, Likud resorted to the pro-Israel forces within the United States to explain and indeed to lobby the American public opinion and the Congress against territorial compromise.[30] Therefore, the role assigned to the pro-Israeli forces was *hasbara* (information). This means that the pro-Israeli forces explain to the American public and the Congress why it was not possible for Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. The *hasbara* was intended to

> Counteract the Arab spin on events, maintain a political atmosphere in Washington conducive to understanding Likud policies and thus prevent American pressure for a peace settlement along the lines consistently favoured by the State Department since 1967.[31]

In addition, the *hasbara* was employed to maintain American aid to Israel regardless of the incompatibility of Likud's policies in the Occupied Territories and Likud's position on the peace process with that of the American administrations. Though this strategy succeeded many times especially during the Cold War when Israel and the United States had a common strategic interests (containing the Soviet influence in the Middle East), it actually failed to dissuade the Bush Administration in 1992 from linking the $10 billion loan guarantee to Israel's compliance to freeze settlement activity in the West Bank.

On the contrary, due to Labour's declared policy for 'territorial compromise' and its compatibility with that of the American administrations' position, Labour saw no

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30 Jonathan Rynhold, 1997, op. cit., p.243.

31 Ibid., p.243.

benefits from relying on the pro-Israeli forces. Labour preferred not to rely on the *hasbara*. Shimon Peres, in his capacity as Foreign Minister, abolished the hasbara department in 1993.[32] He was quoted; 'if you have a good policy, you do not need *hasbara*. And if you have a bad policy, hasbara will not help.'[33] Rabin insisted that the Israeli Embassy should handle Israel's policies in the United States.[34] Israel should, according to Labour's approach, co-ordinate directly with the administration and not through the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

Rabin was very critical, as AIPAC became increasingly aggressive in lobbying in the United States on issues relating to the Middle East. Rabin often thought that their efforts only led to confrontation with the American administrations.[35] Therefore, he supported limiting AIPAC's role in Labour's peace strategy. He believed that their aggressive lobbying would only lead to undermining one of the most important pillars in the relationship with the United States; that was 'the intergovernmental strategic basis of the relationship.'[36] This was clear during the unsuccessful efforts exerted by the Jewish lobbyists to dissuade Ronald Reagan from selling AWACS planes to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1981. Many circles within Labour regarded the pro-Israeli forces as working against realising peace in the Middle East. After hosting a meeting with AIPAC vice president in June 1993, deputy Foreign Minister, Yossi Beilin, expressed his shock at the spoiling role played by AIPAC. Beilin was surprised to hear AIPAC

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[32] *The Jerusalem Post*, May 3, 1993.

[33] *The Jerusalem Post*, May 6, 1993.

[34] David Horovitz, op. cit., p.157.

[35] Ibid., p.57.

[36] Jonathan Rynhold, 1997, op. cit., p.249.

vice president Harvey Friedman advocating the idea of expelling the Palestinians from the territories.[37] Beilin was quoted as saying:

> We want US involvement in the peace process; their agenda was to keep the Americans out. We want peace based on compromise, and their agenda was to explain why compromise was impossible.[38]

To sum up, successive Israeli governments viewed the role of the United States differently. In the post-Cold War era, when the strategic importance of Israel to the United States came under question, it seemed that only a Labour-led government with a compromising approach could improve relations with the American administration. Unlike Shamir, Rabin's readiness to adopt a 'land for peace' formula facilitated Israel's request for the loan guarantee. The Bush administration was convinced that although Shamir agreed to attend the Madrid Peace Conference, nothing would come out of it so long as Israel was governed by Likud.[39]

If the United States was the most important external player in Israel's security and defence policies, Jordan was the player that for three decades the Israeli governments considered as the only potential partner to solve the Palestinian problem. Jordan's positions on peace with Israel had greatly influenced Israel's peace policies.

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[37] David Horovitz, op. cit., p.159.

[38] Quoted in Ibid., p.159.

[39] James A. Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy, Revolution, War and Peace, 1989-92* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995).

Jordan

Since 1967 Jordan has occupied a pivotal role in Middle East peacemaking. In every single peace proposal, Jordan was assigned an important role. In fact, the leaders of both Israel and Jordan have always wanted to arrive at peace. However, their endeavours were bound to fail due to factors that this section will evaluate. This section provides an analytical understanding of Israel's perception of the role to be played by Jordan in the peace process.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, Jordan has found itself involved in the Palestinian problem due to its geo-strategic location. The fact that Jordan ruled over the West Bank for 19 years and lost the territories in the 1967 War deepened its involvement in the Middle East peace process. Furthermore, Jordan is the host country of 40 per cent of the total number of Palestinian refugees, strengthening the importance of the role of Jordan in the peace process.[40] Accordingly, Jordan has attached great importance to the peace process.

Israelis believed that King Hussein's desire to achieve peace with Israel was genuine.[41] However, it was Israel which ironically sought peace with Hussein, but did not offer sufficient inducements to do so.[42] Israel never offered him what he asked for. Jordan's position concerning peace with Israel since 1967 has remained constant. The King's

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[40] Marouf al Bakhit, 'The Israeli-Jordanian Track,' Unpublished paper. A workshop in Geneva in May 2000.

[41] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[42] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

insistence on 'land for peace' was totally rejected by the Likud-led governments.[43] Neither was Jordan's request for a full withdrawal for peace received well by Labour. Israeli policies, indeed, never helped the King conclude a peace treaty with Israel. Rabin once asked the King if he was ready for peace with Israel without the approval of the Arab countries and the King answered positively but only if Israel agreed to give him back the whole of the West Bank including East Jerusalem.[44] This is the Jordanian option from a Jordanian standpoint. It is, as Asher Susser confirms:

> A complete Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, the restoration of Jerusalem to Arab sovereignty, with minor but mutual border modification...The only give and take in the territorial issue, from the King's point of view was what he called minor, mutual border rectification.[45]

It is ironic that strategically and in principle, Jordan and Israel would have preferred an agreement between themselves rather than the establishment of a PLO-led state in the West Bank, but territorially they could not agree. As a result, Jordan was not in a position to accept the Jordanian option as proposed by Labour leaders without the blessing of the Arab world or at least without the approval of the PLO. King Hussein's attempts to subordinate the PLO to his peace strategy in the 1980s failed.[46]

The question then concerns Israel's view of Jordan's role in the peace process. Leaders of the Labour Party were certain that the King would not accept as a *quid pro quo* for peace anything short of recovering the whole territories occupied in the 1967 War

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[43] Interview with Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, February 2, 2000.

[44] Moshe Zak, *Hussein Makes Peace* (Bar Illan University: BESA Centre for Strategic Studies, 1996), pp.146-7.

[45] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[46] For more details, see Madiha Madfai, *Jordan, The United States and the Middle East Peace Process 1974-1991* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

including East Jerusalem.[47] The King had made this point clear during all his clandestine meetings with Israeli leaders. Therefore, why had Labour insisted on the Jordanian option once they understood that this was a non-starter from a Jordanian standpoint? The answer, in fact, had to do with Israeli domestic politics. As Asher Susser puts it: 'the Jordanian option became, I think, more of a vehicle for domestic Israeli politics, for the Labour Party to say that they had a solution for the territory as opposed to the Likud idea of annexation.'[48]

Unwittingly, the Arabs helped Labour leaders in their strategy towards Jordan. The Arab summit in Rabat (see Chapter Two) designated the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. By taking this resolution, the Arabs, in fact, gave Labour leaders the best possible excuse for delaying a decision on peace with Jordan. Certainly, had the Arabs declined from delegitimising Jordan as a representative to the Palestinians, the situation would have been completely different given that Hussein was an acceptable player to both the United States and Israel.[49]

However, the fact remains that Israel was, due to domestic political considerations, not ready for territorial compromise. The election of the Likud Party in 1977 had changed the situation. Its advocating of an aggressive settlement policy in the West Bank further discouraged Jordan from coming to terms with Israel. Moreover, some influential

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[47] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem January 31, 2000.

[48] Interview with Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, February 16, 2000.

[49] Roland Dallas, *King Hussein, a Life on the Edge* (London: Profile Books Ltd., 1999), p.XXII.

circles within Likud adopted the idea that 'Jordan was Palestine'.[50] Among them were the controversial Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Shamir. King Hussein concluded that the best strategy to protect his kingdom was by severing Jordan's links with the West Bank, thus declaring the death of the Jordanian option. Hussein's decision came at a time when Labour was undergoing profound changes (see previous chapters) *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians. Jordan's decision to disengage only accelerated a Palestinian orientation in the Labour Party's foreign policy. Labour's realisation that the Jordanian option, as proposed by the Labour Party, was a non-starter forced them to find a Palestinian partner for peace negotiations.[51]

Israel's decision to acknowledge the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians and the subsequent conclusion of the Oslo Accord came as a deviation from the Jordanian option. However, the Oslo agreement was also the prerequisite for a separate peace between Jordan and Israel. Jordan was surprised by the Oslo agreement, but it set a precedent for Jordan on which to proceed with Israel. Furthermore, the Oslo agreement exposed the bankruptcy of the notion of Arab unity that had prevented King Hussein from arriving at a peace with Israel. This time nobody could accuse King Hussein of betraying the Arab cause.[52] The Peace treaty signed on October 26, 1994 was ratified by the elected Jordanian parliament.

So far, the United States and Jordan have been listed as external players that indeed

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[50] For a brief overview of Likud's policy towards Jordan see Robert Bookmiller, 'Likud's Jordan Policy,' *Middle East Policy*, vol.5, no.3 (September 1997), pp.90-103.

[51] Interview with Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[52] Roland Dallas, op. cit., p.228.

affected successive Israeli governments' peace strategies. However, the Israeli leaders did not formulate their positions in a vacuum. The Madrid Peace Conference and Israeli reactions to its objectives came in the post-Cold War era and immediately after the Gulf War. These two events left a profound impact on Labour.

The Impact of Global and Regional Changes

This section examines to what extent regional and global changes influenced Israeli strategic thinking. It also examines the effect of systemic factors (the transformation of the international system from bipolarity to unipolarity, the end of the Cold War, and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union), and regional changes (the defeat of Iraq by the American-led coalition and its impact on the regional balance of power) on Israeli decision-makers' policy preferences concerning peace.

It should be stressed at this point that the contention that the Cold War and the superpowers' rivalry in the Middle East had, in effect, prevented peacemaking in the Middle East can not stand up to scrutiny. Furthermor, the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict had little to do with the Cold War. It had started upon the advent of Zionist settlers migrating from Europe to Palestine and reached its peak when the Zionist movement succeeded in establishing a Jewish state in Palestine at the expense of the indigenous Palestinians many of whom were later uprooted from their homes. Prior to the Madrid peace conference (1991), Israel's refusal or acceptance of peace initiatives should be understood within the context of its expansionist ideology and with its complicated domestic politics but not necessarily as directly connected to the Cold War.

As a consequence, one should not be tempted to account for the lack of peace by simply referring to the global rivalry between the superpowers.

Having said that however, the Cold War and global rivalry was used on many occasions by Likud-led governments to disguise its rejection of peace proposals. Indeed, the relationship between the superpowers and their clients in the Middle East was a complicated one. On many occasions, regional clients were able to manipulate the superpower rivalry in order to further their own national interests as perceived by decision-makers. As Avi Shlaim argues, 'it would be inaccurate, therefore, to think of the local powers as mere pawns in the game played by great powers.'[53] The door was opened for peace when local players came to believe that peace would serve their interests, regardless of the Cold War. For example, the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel signed in March 1979 came from a regional initiative although its successful conclusion was facilitated by a third party (the American administration). President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and the Israeli Prime Minster, Menachem Begin, did not give attention to global rivalries when they decided to explore the chances of peace, despite Carter's agenda of freezing out the Soviets.

Hence, it would be rather simplistic to argue that the removal of the global rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union would automatically lead to peace in the Middle East. However, as argued above, the demise of the Cold War provided the necessary, although not the sufficient conditions for the initiation of what could be termed as conflict resolution. Shlomo Avineri maintains that the end of the Cold War

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[53] Avi Shlaim, *War and Peace in the Middle East* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1994/1995), p.4.

coupled with the defeat of Israel's most powerful enemy, Iraq, were the events that made the Madrid peace conference possible.[54] Nevertheless, although this is correct with regard to the initiation of the process, it should not be confused with the conditions that guaranteed a successful conclusion.

The Second Gulf War was the regional factor that further changed the balance of power in the region. Put differently, it further changed the military balance of power in Israel's favour. The resultant collapse of the Arab order, coupled with military defeat of the most powerful Arab army (the Iraqi army), diminished the prospects for creating an 'eastern front' which would combine the armies of Jordan, Syria, and most importantly, Iraq. The war also impacted on the idea of a united Arab political front. The war left a profound imprint on inter-Arab politics and led to the fragmentation of the already fragile Arab order. The outcome must have been a relief for the Israeli government.

As a consequence, the combined impact of both the end of the Cold War and the defeat of Iraq in the Second Gulf War placed Israel in a much better strategic environment. Professor Anoushiravan Ehteshami maintains that:

> As the radical Arab states were losing important foreign backers, Israel was improving its position in absolute terms: it was increasing the flow of European Jews to Israel, and it was doing so without disturbing its strategic alliance with the United States. On the other hand, in the absence of an all-powerful Soviet bloc, Israel's Arab adversaries were unable to find alternative influential foreign friends without compromising their pan-Arab policies and reforming their foreign policy to make them more palatable to western appetites. For the first time in many years Israel had both the strategic as well as the political edge on its Arab competitors.[55]

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[54] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[55] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, 'The Arab States and the Middle East Balance of Power,' in James Gow (ed.), *Iraq, The Gulf Conflict and the World Community* (London: Brassey's), p.61.

Israel, as a result of the collapse of the eastern bloc, has established diplomatic relations with many countries, which during the Cold War were allied with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had broken off its diplomatic ties with Israel following the June War in 1967. Following the end of the Cold War in 1989, the Soviet Union opened the door for Jewish immigration (*Aliyah*) to Israel. The immigrants (*olim*) have strengthened Israel, at least demographically.[56]

However, the Gulf War had left a deep imprint on many politicians' view regarding the envisioned security function of the Occupied Territories. Clive Jones argues that the Iraqi missile attacks against Israel during the Gulf War 'created fresh divisions [within Israel] regarding the strategic worth of the territories.'[57] The argument that retaining the Occupied Territories would provide Israel with the strategic depth it needed and would protect the densely populated coastal areas was shattered by Iraq's attack. Iraq had a delivery system that could launch missiles and hit any point in Israel. The fact is that, as Anoushiravan Ehteshami correctly points out, the missiles fired, 'from the territories of a non-front line Arab state challenged Israel's strategic depth doctrine and the continued occupation of the West Bank as an important buffer zone.'[58] It is widely believed that Syria has such military capabilities as well. Therefore, should a war arise between Syria and Israel, it would be inconceivable that the Occupied Territories could provide the strategic buffer that Israel hoped it would.

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[56] For the implication of the *Aliyah* on Israel, see Clive Jones, *Soviet Jewish Aliyah, 1989-1992: Impact and Implications for Israel and the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

[57] Ibid., p.71.

[58] Anoushiravan Ehteshami, op. cit., p.66.

Moreover, the strategic importance of the territories in the context of modern warfare is a contested issue in Israel. Labour doves, Peres in particular, argued that territory is not important in the age of the modern missiles. Influenced by the experience of the Gulf War, Peres states: 'Anybody speaking on security in terms of kilometers only...does not understand that geography is secondary to technology.'[59] The opposite argument is presented by Likud and right wing parties. Efraim Inbar maintains that partial withdrawal from the West Bank would curtail Israel's ability to defend its population, around 70 per cent of which is concentrated in the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv-Haifa triangle.[60] However the debate over the importance of territory for security masked the real undefined issue within Zionism: the final borders of the state. As Clive Jones so eloquently argues:

> The inherent cleavages within the whole concept of Zionism, and most notably, the exact dimensions of the Jewish State, created a situation in which Israel's security was measured against a sliding scale of ideological priorities dictated by successive governments. This in return masked the fundamental source of tension throughout the region: the Palestinian quest for national self-determination. Thus arguments over demographics and security were subservient to a basic fault within Zionist Ideology: its failure to define its territorial borders and, by extension, the limits of any Palestinian entity.[61]

Indeed, that was the unresolved debate which precluded the consolidation of a unified position in Israel. Labour's leaders were able to discern the strategic consequences of these changes and therefore they used these new changes as munitions to advance their long-held argument regarding the preference of peace over territories. Yitzhak Rabin

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[59] Quoted in Efraim Inbar, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics: Labor Party Positions on National Security* (USA and UK: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 1991), p.105.

[60] Efraim Inbar, 'Israel's Predicament in a New Strategic Environment,' in Efraim Inbar and Gabriel Sheffer (eds.), *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p.166.

[61] Clive Jones, op. cit., p.72.

was quick to realise the importance of this global change. In an article in the Jerusalem post in June 1992, he wrote:

> One must be a fool not to perceive and understand what has happened. The Soviet Union, the former major patron of our enemies, fell apart and ceased to exist as a superpower. As a result both Syria and Iraq no longer have a shoulder to lean on...After what happened in the Soviet Union, the US remains the only effective superpower, and it is calling the cues for a new world order. A peaceful Middle East is one of the cornerstones of this New World Order.[62]

Certainly, the replacement of a bipolar system to unipolar one in which the United States has enjoyed a hegemonic position within the Middle East further moderated Rabin's stand regarding territorial compromise. This development, indeed, led Rabin to conclude that, from a military standpoint, the regional strategic environment was improving for Israel.'[63] As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Rabin's position regarding the political future of the Occupied Territories stemmed from his perceptions of the security risks Israel's withdrawal would pose. Shlomo Avineri argues that Rabin never seriously considered the notion of conceding the Golan Heights to Syria in return for peace before the end of the Cold War.[64] In the negotiations between Syria and Israel, it was reported that Rabin had agreed to give back the Golan Heights to Syria in return for full peace in 1993.[65]

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[62] Yitzhak Rabin, 'Pragmatism and Compromise,' *The Jerusalem Post*, June 1, 1992.

[63] Interview with Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem. February 7, 2000.

[64] Interview with Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, January 31, 2000.

[65] Interview with Moshe Maoz, March 21, 1998. In the interview, Maoz argued that it was Syria who rejected the offer twice on the assumption that President Hafez Assad could extract better terms. He argued that Assad did not understand the differences between Likud and Labour and so he missed a golden opportunity to recover his land. For a counter argument see Seale, Patrick, 'The Syria-Israel Negotiations: Who is Telling the Truth?' *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol.XXIX, no.2 (2000), pp.65-77.

Despite Avineri's assertion of the decisive impact of the end of the Cold War on Rabin's strategic thinking with respect to Syria, this factor was not as decisive as Avineri maintains when it comes to Rabin's, and indeed Labour's, position *vis-à-vis* the West Bank. The reason for this argument is that no Israeli government ever had a free hand to grant a territorial concession to the Palestinians or even to Jordan without taking into account the implications of this on Israeli domestic politics. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, the Labour-led government (1974-77) was able to sign two disengagement agreements with Egypt, and one with Syria with minimal domestic opposition. However, the Rabin-led government failed to do the same with Jordan due to extremely strong internal opposition to withdrawal from the West Bank. It is, therefore, valid to argue that in democracies, which include Israel (though for Jews only), external pressure, in most cases, is not sufficient to produce a certain outcome.

From the above discussion, we can conclude that the end of the Cold War and the outcome of the Gulf War had influenced the position of key players in Israel. Hawks within Labour, like Rabin, who systematically sought to involve the United States in the peace process, were convinced of the imperatives of taking a degree of security risk to achieve peace. Doves, like Peres, were given additional ammunition for their argument of the insignificant of the territories for the security of Israel in modern warfare.

The two events also impacted on the policies of the Bush administration in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, the Bush administration found it difficult to ignore the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, the American intervention in the Gulf was facilitated by the political, logistic, and military co-operation of the main Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. The American administration had promised the

Arabs that after the conclusion of the Gulf Crisis, there would be a serious attempt to solve the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. In her study of the impact of the New World Order on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Emma Murphy notes that:

> The hypocrisy of the Western position (taking a moral stand against Iraqi occupation of Kuwait but unwilling to take action against similar Israeli action against the Palestinians) rekindled Arab grievances against historic and arbitrary Western imperialism in the region. It was only possible for the United States to draw in Arab participation in the multinational military force by committing itself to convening an international peace conference after the war which would bring Israel to a table at which the 'land for peace' proposal was the central agenda.[66]

The Bush administration kept its pledge to deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Secretary of State James Baker exerted an immense pressure on the Likud government to attend the peace conference. As Joseph Alpher rightly argues that without this American pressure, it would have been inconceivable that Shamir would have approved attending the peace conference in Madrid.[67]

To sum up, this section argues that the Second Gulf War and the transformation of the international system into a unipolar one have resulted in a different strategic environment that brought about an increase in American involvement in the Arab-Israeli dispute. For the first time since 1967, it was possible to start the process of initiation of conflict resolution.

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[66] Emma Murphy, 'The Arab-Israeli Conflict in the New World Order,' in Haifaa A. Jawad (ed.), *The Middle East in the New World Order*, second edition (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1997), p.112.

[67] Interview with Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, February 13, 2000.

Conclusions

This chapter examined how the interaction of the external factors provided the necessary preconditions for peacemaking. They created a benign regional and international environments to which domestic politics responded in a positive way. This chapter has highlighted the relative significance of external factors and their bearings on Israeli foreign policy. By far, the most important external player that has impacted upon Israel's peace strategy is the United States. Since the Six-Day War, the United States has become involved in every peace initiative and, more importantly, the United States has been perceived as the only external player with the ability and necessary influence to play a constructive role in any peace agreement

However, the key to understanding the place the United States had in Israel's peace strategies lies within the sphere of Israeli domestic politics. Labour and Likud had different views of the American role in the Middle East peace process. Labour's advocacy of the 'land for peace' formula facilitated a better relationship with the American administrations. Rabin, for example, sought to involve the United States in the peace process for security reasons. He believed that there was a crucial role for the United States to play. As a consequence, the Labour-led governments tried to avoid confrontation with successive American administrations. Likud, however, sought to realise the dream of a Greater Israel without taking into account the American position. This crystallised into the loan guarantee crisis. Shamir believed that the pro-Israel forces in the United States would be a constraint on the Bush administration. As a consequence, he did not subordinate his policies regarding the peace process to the American positions and interests. Rabin's assumption of power in 1992 was extremely

important for a more fruitful co-ordination between the two countries *vis-à-vis* the peace process.

Jordan was the second most important player in Israel's peace strategies. Jordan's delicate geo-strategic location had forced the country to be interested in the peace process. However, Jordan never had a free hand in dealing with Israel over the Palestinian problem. Jordan's reliance on the Arab countries for vital economic aid had narrowed the King's room for manoeuvre. The Jordanian option, which had been advocated by the Labour Party for more than two decades, remained meaningless simply because neither could the King have accepted it nor was Israel willing to accept Hussein's insistence on recovering all territories lost in the 1967 War. Jordan's decision to disengage from the West Bank forced Labour to look for a Palestinian option. Once the Israelis began to lean towards a Palestinian option, the solution did not take long. In 1993, the PLO and Labour-led government signed the Oslo accord. This was enough for Jordan to sign a peace treaty with Israel without fearing any punishment from the Arab World.

The impact of the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of the Second Gulf War, of course, had a significant impact on key players especially within Labour. The Second Gulf War and the fact that the Iraqi army was able to attack Israel with missiles proved the importance of technology in future warfare and indeed opened up a new debate over the importance of the territories for the security of Israel. As a consequence, Labour doves used this argument, about the insignificance of territories for security, in order to strengthen their conciliatory positions towards the Palestinians.

To conclude, this chapter has demonstrated that the external factors only created the necessary conditions for the initiation of conflict resolution. Their interactions had created a positive environment in which the sufficient conditions within the dynamics of Israeli domestic politics could grow. However, these sufficient conditions had still to evolve in the ways outlined in previous chapters of this thesis.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has demonstrated the relative significance of what have been termed the internal dynamics of Israeli politics in the process of peacemaking in the period between 1988 and 1994. As has been argued throughout the thesis that Israel's road to a peace with the Palestinians and subsequently with Jordan can best be understood by appreciating the internal inputs such as the intra and inter- party politics, the politics of coalition, ideology, and the politics of personality, into the making of its foreign policy.

This thesis makes a clear distinction between what is necessary and what is sufficient for Israel to make decisions on peace. The external factors established the pre-conditions necessary to provide the right international and regional environments to which the internal politics could respond positively. The external dynamics are deemed necessary to what is termed the initiation of conflict resolution. However, the evolution of domestic politics established the sufficient conditions that led Israeli leaders to respond positively to the opportunities offered by the external factors. As a consequence, the linkage between the internal and the external in foreign policy making is established, which means the internal politics evolve *partly but only partly* in response to the external environmental developments. More significantly are the internal developments that take place autonomously from, or even in spite of, external developments. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, the intra-party factional politics, block politics, politics of coalition, ideology, and the politics of personality are the real key to understanding why the domestic scene responded to the international scene in such a way as to lead to the decision to make peace.

The study began with an overview of what might be termed the historical background to the contemporary foreign policy of Israel. This chapter demonstrated that since the foundation of the State of Israel certain aspect of domestic politics have had a considerable impact upon the formulation of Israel's policies *vis-à-vis* the Arab states. Here the chapter laid out several of the historic themes—such as ideology, security, and differences among major political parties—which shaped the state of Israel.

Indeed, a major part of understanding contemporary Israel is an appreciation that Tel Aviv for many years avoided initiating a definitive peace strategy lest this inspired internal political upheaval. Specifically, as the chapter demonstrated, the Labour Party suffered from internal divisions over the conquered territories. This problem limited the options of successive premiers who found themselves balancing conflicting opinions. Added to the issue of the conquered territories were other dynamics of Israeli politics—not least that of personality. As the thesis demonstrated the politics of personality became acute when Rabin formed his first government (1974-77). He was haunted by his mistrust and suspicion of his arch-rival Shimon Peres. This, as discussed in the second and the fifth chapters, contributed to lack of peace initiatives on the part of the Israeli side.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, the interaction of the three factional positions within Labour had completely paralysed the ability of the party to take a clear decision *vis-à-vis* the political future of the Occupied Territories. A decision—over whether to offer territories or not and if yes how much and for what—was not possible given the leaders' personal political stake in staying in power. This was exacerbated by the fact that the NRP became more hawkish particularly after the 1973 War. Thus given the importance

and bearing of the politics of coalition, the Labour Party had to respond to the demands of the indispensable coalition partners in such a way that made deciding on peace and maintaining a Labour-led government incompatible. To justify the inability to offer a clear policy on the future of the Occupied Territories, Labour leaders insisted that there was no Arab partner who was willing to negotiate. This explanation for this immobilism was employed in order to disguise successive Israeli governments' inability to resolve the inherent debate within Zionism over the exact physical borders of the Jewish State. Hence, as was demonstrated in Chapter Two Labour's adoption of a form of what might be termed the Jordanian option should not be perceived seriously.

As was shown in Chapter Two, Likud's ascendance to power in 1977 was a watershed in Israel's politics and history. The ideological input into the making of Israeli foreign policy became more salient. This party, under the leadership of Menachem Begin and later Yitzhak Shamir was driven by a Revisionist Zionist ideology that views the West Bank as an integral part of biblical Israel. The practical translation of their ideology was the construction of many settlements in the heart of the West Bank.

Yet the ultimate goal was to prevent future Labour-led governments from conceding territories to Jordan even in exchange for peace. The underlying difference between Labour and Likud was on the issue of land. Labour considered that any sort of territorial concession to Jordan in exchange for peace would keep Israel both Jewish and democratic. Labour's insistence on territorial compromise stemmed from a demographic nightmare, which is, as illustrated in the second and final chapters, why Labour adopted the Jordanian option. By contrast, Likud downplayed the demographic threat and insisted that Israel had a historical right to claim sovereignty over the West

Bank and Gaza. They placed the value of territories over any other value including peace. As a consequence, the formation of an NUG in 1984 and another one in 1988 only paralysed the decision-making process. Here again, the imperatives of coalition government were salient. Given the different ideological and strategic outlooks between the two main coalition partners, i.e. Likud and Labour, it only precluded and indeed delayed the evolution of a domestic environment that could respond positively to the developments in the regional environment. The result of this immobilism and the aggressive settlement policy was the Palestinian Intifada, which formed the substance of the third chapter.

The Palestinian Intifada (1987-1993) proved to the Israeli elite that the political status quo was not an option. It demonstrated to all players engaged in the Palestinian-Israeli problem, particularly Israel, that there should be a political solution to their plight. It was acknowledged that the occupation must end and the Palestinians' natural right to self-determination was to be acknowledged in order to end the Intifada.

The Intifada left a profound imprint on Israeli politics and was an important input in the reformulation of the Israeli leaders' stands regarding peace. During the Intifada, Israeli decision-makers came to the conclusion that there was no military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and that a peaceful avenue should be explored should the parties to the conflict seek to coexist. The party most affected by the Intifada was, as I have argued, the Labour Party. It has been illustrated that the Intifada impacted on the intra-party developments and led the party to adopt what has been described as increasingly dovish positions. It also inspired members of the younger generation, such as Yossi Beilin, Avraham Burg, and Haim Ramon, to advance some of their long-held ideological

demands, such as the necessity to acknowledge the Palestinian national rights and the PLO.

The Intifada displayed to the world the differences between the Labour and Likud parties. The former was regarded as a pragmatic and willing to explore any peaceful avenue whereas the latter was viewed as intransigent. Shamir's rejection of the Shultz plan, the Mubarak plan, and the Baker plan provides evidence of the stubbornness of Likud. Indeed, as Chapter Three demonstrated, even Shamir's Plan, which came as a result of Rabin's constant pressure, was not a serious attempt to find a solution to the Palestinian problem. Shamir resorted to delaying tactics in order to keep Labour in his government and equally importantly to avoid a showdown with the 'constraint ministers' within his party. His ideological inclinations, his personal political interests, and the factional imperatives within Likud were the reason for the lack of seriousness on his part.

Of course, as the thesis has demonstrated, it was not simply a matter of elite infighting. The impact of the Intifada was profound in terms of the public discourse. The percentage of those who advocated the political status quo dropped from 47.1 per cent in 1986 to 2.4 per cent in May 1990. The drop, as shown in Chapter Three, is accounted for by the outbreak and persistence of the Intifada. This proved crucial in the 1992 election when Rabin and his colleagues in the party were able to level criticism against Likud for the continuation of the Intifada and the resultant deterioration of security within Israel itself.

Though the Palestinian Uprising was not in itself able to defeat the Israeli militarily, it had a critical impact on the thinking of those in power. Most notable here was the impact upon Yitzhak Rabin, who realised that the only legitimate partner for peace negotiations was the Palestinians. Therefore, by adopting a Palestinian option, Rabin and indeed Labour took the first step in the right direction.

Here though the importance of regaining power was a crucial feature of the period. As Chapter Four demonstrated, Labour's decision to adopt internal reforms was driven primarily by the desire to unseat Likud and regain power. Labour's defeat in the ballot in 1977 had haunted the party. It took Labour leaders about a decade to grasp the underlying reasons behind the electoral decline of the party. The reason for Labour's successive electoral defeats was found in the fact that Labour's leader failed to see the underlying causes of the party's continuous electoral defeats. Labour had simply ceased to be either representative or responsive to the development and evolution of different constituencies. This failure deprived it of targeting successfully the changing constituencies in Israel. For example, Labour had alienated the increasing large Sephardi constituency.

Therefore, as Chapter Four argued, the intra-party developments such as the adoption of the democratic reforms (by adopting the American-style primaries in selecting both the candidate for the premiership and the list of Knesset candidates) led to two important conclusions with a much wider implication for the peace process. First, the list was the most representative in the history of the party. Many young candidates, who happened to be of what I have termed dovish inclinations, were elected and indeed they were able to introduce some ideological changes to the party's platform. These changes further

took the party to the left regarding the Palestinians. A second consequence was that Rabin was able finally to lead the party. It was widely believed among the party members that Rabin's chances to gain power were much higher than those of Peres, who suffered from the problem of inelectibility. Despite his unparalleled success as a statesman, he never won a single general election. The problem remained however that Peres, due to his 15-year leadership of the party, was in a formidable position. He enjoyed undisputed control of the party's organs. Therefore, it was only possible for Rabin to lead the party after the introduction of the American-style primaries where the party's entire membership had the right to cast their vote.

Here again we see the importance of personality. Rabin' eventual victory over Shamir changed Israel's position concerning peace. He was able first of all to sign the Oslo agreement with the PLO, and more significantly to sell it to the Israeli public. As was argued in Chapter Five, Rabin's belief system—an open one—was central to these changes. That is to say that his existing beliefs were not that rigid to exclude new information and thus were subject to changes. The demise of the Cold War and its consequences for Israel's international standing led Rabin to concluded that Israel was a normal state that no longer dwelled alone. This is contrary to his long-held perception, influenced by his Jewish prism, that perceived Israel as 'a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.' This change was an important one given that his Jewish prism was dominant in perceiving matters. It was also demonstrated that the Zionist/Jewish prism was strong enough to discourage Israeli leaders from contemplating peace. Rabin's pessimistic perception, as argued in Chapter Five, was caused by the Jewish prism but also reinforced by his military experience. In the army,

Rabin was socialised to regard military power as an important factor in international relations.

Rabin's pessimistic outlook was exacerbated by some of his personal traits (i.e. suspicion and lack of trust in others, as well as the outside world). His suspicion and lack of trust was no more evident than in this relationship with his rival Peres. Their perennial personal competition over the leadership of the party hindered the peace process in Rabin's first term as Prime Minister. However, the transformation of this relationship to a working one after Labour's victory in 1992 was of great importance in the success of the Labour-led government in proceeding with the PLO. Both leaders—knowing that this time might be the last for both to be in power due to the age factor—agreed to put aside their chronic personal differences and work genuinely for peace. Without this new relationship, the Oslo agreement and the subsequent peace treaty with Jordan, would not have most probably been concluded.

Although the bulk of the thesis concentrated on the internal dynamics of Israel, this does not mean that in anyway the external dimension of the peace process has been or could be ignored, not least because bureaucratic politics in Israel also proved to be susceptible to external pressures especially those provided by the end of the Cold War and the renewed interest of the United States in peace in the Middle East.

Indeed as the thesis demonstrated in Chapter Six, the end of the Cold War and the demise of Iraq's military power created a more benign strategic environment for Israel. This indeed impacted on the perception of decision-makers to the nature and level of

threat. Rabin never contemplated withdrawal from the Golan Heights even in exchange for peace before the end of the Cold War.

The role of the United States in Israel's peace strategy was of course a considerable one. Israel's need for the American support has increased with time, creating a dependency relationship. However, as was demonstrated, Israel, under Shamir refused to budge and to give in to American demands regarding peace and a freeze on settlement expansion. Here the fundamental differences occurred between Rabin and Shamir. Rabin was ready to consider some territorial concession and to co-ordinate with the American administration to realise peace with favourable terms.

The role of Jordan on Israel's peace strategy proved to be crucial for Labour. However there was a dilemma. King Hussein was motivated to prevent a Palestinian orientation in Israel' foreign policy (for security reasons) but at the same time constrained by his inter-Arab position. He was denied the right to represent the Palestinians. Labour, on the other hand, was not ready to talk with the legitimate Palestinian representative (the PLO), but was not offering Jordan enough to induce a defection from the Arab consensus. Jordan's decision to sever its ties with the West Bank came as a result of disillusionment. Unwittingly, this decision had two far-reaching implications. First, it forced Labour to drop the Jordanian option by adopting a Palestinian one. Second it created the ground for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement which indeed was a pre-requisite for the Israel-Jordanian peace treaty.

To sum up, the contribution of this thesis to the scholarly literature lies in presenting a new way of interpreting Israel's foreign policy: one that regards the internal dynamics of

Israel's domestic politics as the key to understanding the breakthrough in the peace process. By operating concepts from middle-range theories, it was possible to trace the stance contributing to the positions of key players and see exactly when and how they evolved and what caused such a shift. The framework adopted allowed us to establish the input of factors derived from domestic politics and their impact on the formulation of foreign policy making in Israel. The thesis demonstrated that the Intifada, coalition formation, personality, ideology, intra- party developments, internal reforms within Labour, inter-party politics, and, to a lesser degree, the impact of external factors on Israeli peace strategies constituted necessary and sufficient conditions for Israel's decision to make peace in 1993.

GLOSSARY

Achdut Havooda A socialist Zionist party that split from Mapai Party in 1944 and joined the Labour Party in 1968.

Agudat Yisrael An ultra-orthodox religious party that opposed Zionism on theological grounds but active in government and legislation.

Aliyah The immigration of Jews to Israel seeking permanent residence.

Ashkenazi A Jew of European and western origin.

Democratic Movement for Change (DMC) A centrist political party, known in Hebrew as Dash, established in 1976 as a continuation of the protest movements which emerged in Israel in the aftermath of the 1973 War. It called for electoral reform and disappeared from Israeli politics by 1981.

Degel Ha Torah An Ashkenazi *haredi* party established on the eve of the 1988 general election.

Eretz Yisrael The Land of Israel.

Gahal A political alliance formed between Herut and the Liberal Party before the general election of 1965.

Goyim The non-Jewish world.

Gush Emunim The Block of Faithful, the messianic movement of the settlers in the West Bank and Gaza.

Halacha Jewish law.

Hamas The Palestinian Movement of Islamic Resistance. It was formed during the first Intifada (1987-93).

Haredi Ultra-orthodox non-Zionist or anti-Zionist Jews.

Hasbara (Explaining) It refers to the effort made by the Likud to explain to the American public why it was not possible to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza. It meant to create a conducive atmosphere in the United States to understand Likud's aggressive settlement policies.

Herut (Freedom) A right wing political party established by Menachem Begin in 1948. It was the key party in Gahal and now the main component of Likud.

Histadrut The General Federation of Labour in Israel established in 1920 and a key economic and political force in Israel.

Intifada The Arabic word for the uprising of 1987.

Judea and Samaria The biblical word for the West Bank

Kach (Thus or this is the way) An Israeli fascist political party which was established by the extremist Rabbi Meir Kahane. It advocated the idea of expelling the Palestinians from their land as a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Kaddum This refers to the settlement arrangement imposed on Rabin during his first tenure as Prime Minister by the settlers movement.

Kahanism A fascist and racist ideology advocated by Rabbi Meir Kahane that calls for the expulsion of the Palestinians not only from the West Bank and Gaza but also from Israel.

Knesset The Israeli parliament.

Kibbutz A socialist collective commune.

Labour The Israeli Labour Party.

Likud (Unity) A right wing political bloc established in 1973, comprising of Gahal and other smaller groups and dominated by Herut.

Mahapach A Hebrew term to refer to the victory of Likud in the general election of 1977.

Mapai A socialist Zionist party established in 1930 which dominated Israeli politics for almost five decades. It became the Labour Party after merging with Achdut Havooda and Rafi in 1968.

Mamlachtiut A Hebrew term meaning statism. It means the supremacy of the state over all other sectarian bases of identity. For example, the dissolution of IZL and the *palmach* in 1948, and the decision to give up the Labour stream in education in 1953 were viewed as decisions in favour of the principle of *mamlachtiut*.

Mapam (United Workers' Party) A left-wing socialist Zionist party, Mapam was part of the Alignment between 1969 and 1984.

Meretz Common list formed by Ratz, Mapam, and Shinui before the 1992 general election. It is now a left Zionist political party.

Merkaz Harav (The Rabbi's Centre) A Jerusalem Zionist Yeshiva founded by Rabbi Avraham Itzhak Hacohen Kook, subsequently led by his son, Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook. This school is the source of inspiration of all the founders of Gush Emunim.

Moledet (Motherland) A radical right wing party established in 1987 by General (rev.) Rehavam Ze'evi (nicknamed Gandi). It adopts the idea of transfer.

Moshav A co-operative agricultural settlement.

National Religious Party (NRP) Known in Hebrew as Mafdal and previously as Mizrachi. This party has been coalition members of almost all the governments. It supports the settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Pikuh Nefsh A biblical term means the primacy of Jewish life over territories.

Progressive List for Peace (PLP) A non-Zionist party set up in 1984. The goals of the party are: full equality for Jewish and Arab citizens within Israel as defined by its borders on June 4, 1967; and mutual recognition of each other by Israel and a Palestinian state to be established in the territories to be evacuated by Israel.

Rafi A splinter party of Mapai, established in 1965 by Ben-Gurion and reunited with Mapai in 1968.

Ratz Civil Rights Movement. A radical social-liberal political party established by Shulamit Aloni in 1973.

Sephardi A Jew of Oriental origin, particularly from North African and the Middle East.

Shas An ultra-orthodox party of Sephardi Jews established in 1984 by former chief Rabbi, Ovadia Yosef.

Shinui A liberal party which developed out of the movements which protested against the refusal of the political establishment to take responsibility for the blunders in the conduct of the 1973 War.

Tehiya (Revival) A radical right political party established in 1979 in protest against the Camp David accords.

Telem A centrist party established by Moshe Dayan in 1981, which disappeared from Israeli politics shortly after Dayan's death in October 1981.

Tzomet (Juncture) A radical right political party established in 1984 by former Chief of Staff, Rafael Eitan.

Yahadut Ha Torah An Ashkenazi *haredi* list formed on the eve of the 1992 elections.

Yahad (Together) A centrist party established by Ezer Weizmann but merged with Labour after the 1984 general election.

Yamit The main Jewish city in Sinai which was established in 1975 only to be evacuated and dismantled in 1982 in compliance with the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty.

Yeshiva Jewish religious seminary or talmudic college for men.

Yishuv The Jewish community in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel.

Yonetz A term which refers to those who are between the hawks and the doves within the Labour Party.

Zionism The official ideology of the State of Israel that called for the establishment of a state for Jews in Palestine and for the immigration of Jews into Israel.

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Shlomo Avineri, Jerusalem, 30 January 2000. Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Former General Director of Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Ra'nan Cohen, Jerusalem, 31 January 2000. The Labour Party's Secretary General, a Labour Member of the Knesset and a Minister of Labour and Social Welfare in Barak's government.

Dan Schueftan, Tel Aviv, 2 February 2000. An Israeli academic and expert on Middle Eastern Affairs.

Aharon Kleiman, Tel Aviv, 2 February, 2000. Professor of International Relations at Tel Aviv University.

Naomi Chazen, Jerusalem, 7 February 2000. Knesset's Deputy Speaker and Meretz Member of the Knesset. She was elected to the Knesset for the first time in 1992 and has been Knesset member since then.

Ahmed Tibi, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 7 February 2000. The Chairman of the Ta'al (Arab Movement for Renewal) and member of the Knesset. He is sitting on the Internal Affairs and Environment Committee and the Anti-Drug Abuse Committee.

Efraim Inbar, Jerusalem, 7 February 2000. Director of Begin and Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies at Bar Ilan University.

Nawaf Massalha, Jerusalem, 8 February 2000. Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister and a Labour Member of the Knesset. Member of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee. He has been Knesset member since 1988.

Yitzhak Shamir, Tel Aviv, 9 February 2000. Former Prime Minister of Israel for the period from 1983 to 1984, and from 1986 to 1992.

Joseph Alpher, Jerusalem, 13 February 2000. Former Director of Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University and former Mossad officer.

Nachman Tal, Tel Aviv, 14 February 2000. He was a former senior official of the General Security Services (GSS) and he was a member of the Israeli delegation to the peace talks with Jordan.

Michael Eitan, Jerusalem, 15 February 2000. Likud Member of the Knesset and a member of the Scientific and Technological Research and Development Committee. Former Minister for Science and Technology in Benjamin Netanyahu's government. He has been Knesset member since 1984.

Reuven Hazen, Jerusalem 15 February 2000. A political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Avraham Burg, Jerusalem, 16 February 2000. Knesset Speaker and Labour Member of the Knesset. He has been a member o the Knesset since 1988.

Asher Susser, Tel Aviv, 16 February 2000. Israeli historian on Jordan and former Director of Moshe Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University.

Mark Heller, Tel Aviv, 16 February 2000. Political Scientist and researcher at Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University.

Aharon Kleiman, Tel Aviv, 2 February 2000. Israeli Professor for International Relations at Tel Aviv University.

Ghassan Khateeb, Geneva, 28 May 2000. Director of Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre. He was a member of the Palestinian delegation to Washington talks.

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